THE RADICAL CRITIQUE

The Gay & Lesbian Review
WORLDWIDE

May–June 2015

$5.95 USA and Canada

MARTIN DUBERMAN
Doug Ireland and the Quest for Social Justice

RYAN CONRAD
Why 'Equality' Is Not the Right Goal

DOLORES KLAICH
The Price of Assimilation

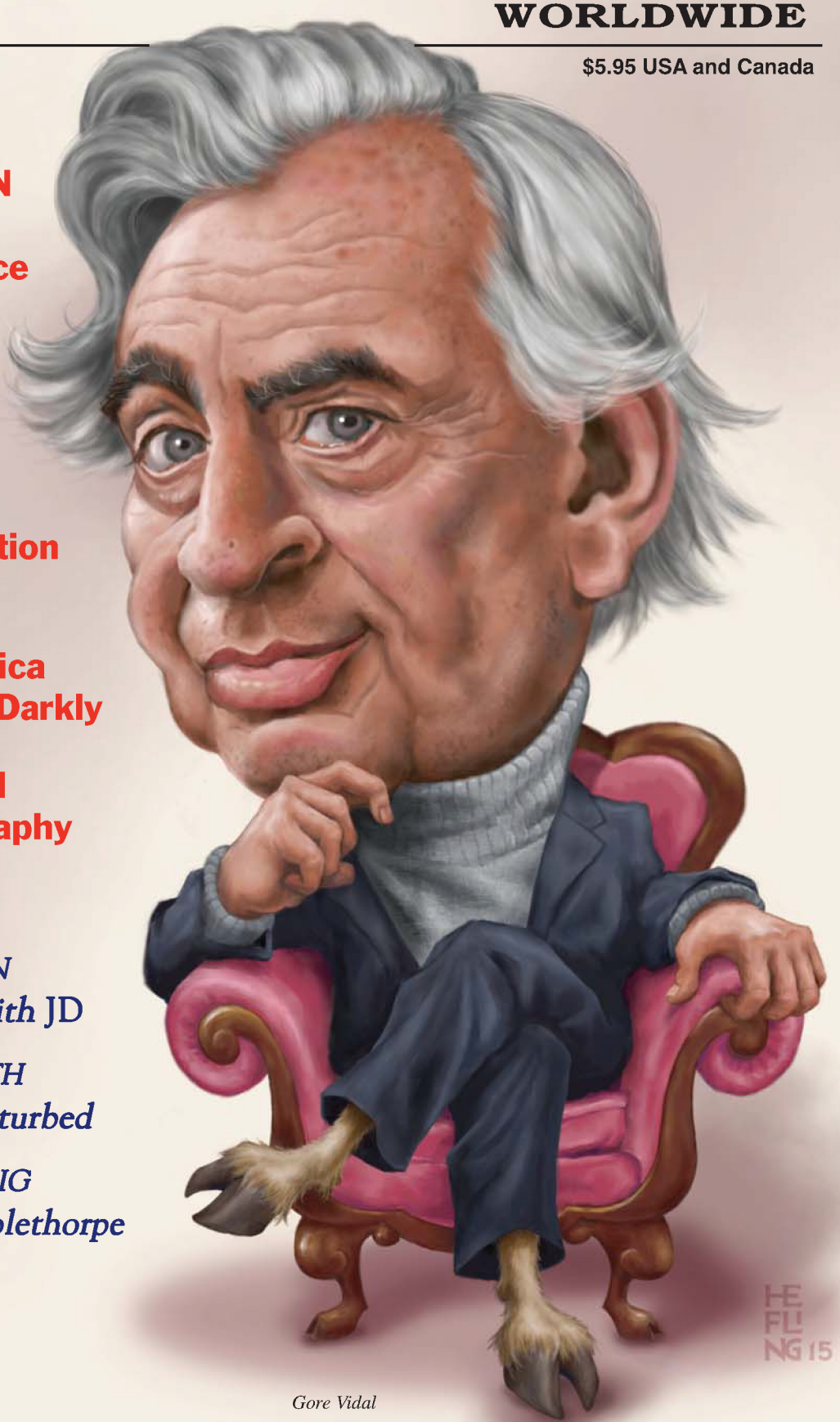
LEWIS GANNETT
Larry Kramer's America Through a Gay Glass Darkly

ANDREW HOLLERAN
Not Another Pathography of Gore Vidal

DENNIS ALTMAN
Mark Merlis is back with JD

ROSEMARY BOOTH
Gabrielle Glancy is disturbed

ALLEN ELLENZWEIG
When Wagstaff met Mapplethorpe



Gore Vidal

05>
7 25274 89368 3

Design Centers

1107 Route 23 S. Wayne, NJ 07470 **&** 155 Route 17 S. Paramus, NJ 07652

Main Office 4 Industrial Road Pequannock, NJ 07440

The Gay & Lesbian Review

May–June 2015 • VOLUME XXII, NUMBER 3

WORLDWIDE

CONTENTS

FEATURES

Roman Holiday 10 ANDREW HOLLERAN
Gore Vidal's epic slide from Italy to LA (with stops in Key West)

No "Equality" without Social Justice 13 RYAN CONRAD
Jim Farley talks with the founder of Against Equality

The Price of Going Mainstream 16 DOLORES KLAICH
Has success spoiled GLBT culture and consciousness?

America through a Gay Glass, Darkly 18 LEWIS GANNETT
Larry Kramer's epic novel revises US history, and it isn't pretty

Doug Ireland's Passion and Praxis 21 MARTIN DUBERMAN
The late activist never succumbed to the lure of easy victory

Lesbians, Please Leave the Stage! 25 LAURENCE SENELICK
An 1891 play was so risqué that even the Théâtre Libre banned it

REVIEWS

Philip Gefter — *Wagstaff: Before and After Mapplethorpe: A Biography* 30 ALLEN ELLENZWEIG
Priya Parmar — *Vanessa and Her Sister* 32 MARTHA E. STONE
BRIEFS 33
Tobias Rüther — *Heroes: David Bowie in Berlin* 34 COLIN CARMAN
Gabrielle Glancy — *I'm Already Disturbed Please Come In* 35 ROSEMARY BOOTH
Charles Blow — *Fire Shut Up in My Bones* 36 YOAV SIVAN
Justin Martin – *Rebel Souls: Walt Whitman and America's First Bohemians* 38 ALAN HELMS
Alfred Corn — *Miranda's Book* 39 JACK MILLER
Mary McAuliffe — *Twilight of the Belle Époque* 40 VERNON A. ROSARIO
Mark Merlis — *JD: A Novel* 41 DENNIS ALTMAN
Eleanor Lerman — *Radiomen* 41 MARY MERIAM
Rupp & Freeman, eds. – *U.S. Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual & Transgender History* 42 CHRIS FREEMAN
Carter Sickels, editor — *Untangling the Knot* 43 DALE BOYER
Tison Pugh — *Truman Capote: A Literary Life at the Movies* 43 JEFF SOLOMON
Storyteller: The Photographs of Duane Michals (exhibition and book) 50 JAMES POLCHIN

POEMS & DEPARTMENTS

Guest Opinon — Therapists: Declare "Ex-Gay Therapy" Unethical 5 JIM WALKER
CORRESPONDENCE 6
In Memoriam — Malcolm Boyd, 1923-2015: A Personal Reflection 7 PHIL WILLKIE
BTW 8 RICHARD SCHNEIDER JR.
Poem — "Songs" by António Botto 20 JOSIAH BLACKMORE
Poem — "Psalm" 24 ED MADDEN
International Spectrum — Coming Out Twice: Gay and Asian in the UK 28 KEN POWELL
Artist's Profile — Jamie Brickhouse Remembers Mama 44 COURT STROUD
CULTURAL CALENDAR 46
Art Memo — James Baldwin Comes Alive in Film Classic 48 GORDON THOMPSON

***The Gay & Lesbian Review*/WORLDWIDE®** (formerly *The Harvard Gay & Lesbian Review,* 1994-99) is published bimonthly by The Gay & Lesbian Review, Inc., a 501(c)(3) educational corporation located in Boston, Mass. **Subscription Rates**, U.S.: $35.70 per year (6 issues). Canada and Mexico: $45.70(US). All other countries: $55.70(US). All non-U.S. sent via air mail. Call 844-752-7829. **Back issues** available for $12 each. *All correspondence sent in a plain envelope marked "GLR."*

WEBSITE: www.GLReview.org • SUBSCRIPTIONS: 844-752-7829 • ADVERTISING: 617-421-0082 • E-MAIL: info@GLReview.org

Annual Pride Issue: "The Radical Critique"

IT WAS ALWAYS INEVITABLE that the GLBT rights movement would become more moderate over time. Such is the fate of all civil rights movements if they're successful, because freedom from discrimination by definition brings the oppressed minority closer in to the social fold, diminishing the magnitude of its oppression. Also, as Max Weber showed, the trajectory of all social enterprise is to grow more bureaucratic and risk-averse over time, as witness the mainstream GLBT rights organizations that occupy large suites in Washington, D.C.

There's also the historical fact that the movement arose during very unusual times. While its organizational model was the Civil Rights Movement of the 1950s, gay liberation was very much a creature of the '60s and thus bore elements of New Left politics, antiwar activism, and hippie culture. When it first exploded onto the scene after the Stonewall Riots—bolstered by the Sexual Revolution that was already in full swing—the goal was not just equal rights but sweeping social change: a radical rethinking of marriage and the family, a whole new attitude toward sexuality, a redefinition of gender roles.

Of course, it couldn't last. Yet the collapse of these utopian ideals was not a failure of gay liberation. Barely a decade after Stonewall, the country had turned to Reagan, and the revolution was over. The gay rights movement actually outlasted the New Left, survived the AIDS epidemic (or was energized by it), and went on to achieve some remarkable things, most recently the widespread adoption of marriage equality. Gays can now serve in the military, too—certainly not something that was envisioned in the early days of "Gay Lib."

That the gay rights movement has lowered its sights to marriage, military service, and freedom from overt discrimination, there is disappointment on the part of those who remember the original goals—and even some who weren't born yet. Sure, we can get married, live in the suburbs, and tend to our portfolios. But the price of assimilation is that we've given up any hope of changing society as a whole. Or so say the critics of today's gay movement, some of whom are featured in this issue.

One such critic is Ryan Conrad, a young activist who's interviewed here. Conrad heads a group called Against Equality whose argument is that "equality" isn't meaningful in the context of crushing *in*equality in society at large. One who remembers the "liberation" era is Dolores Klaich, who ponders the cost of success in various spheres of life. Martin Duberman, himself a leftist historian, discusses the life and work of the late Doug Ireland, who began his firebrand career in the '60s and never gave in to the lure of assimilation. Andrew Holleran reflects on that old gadfly of American politics, Gore Vidal; while Lewis Gannett considers another famous revisionist, Larry Kramer, whose epic novel *The American People* takes on all of U.S. history but whose sharpest barbs over the years have been aimed at the gay rights movement itself. RICHARD SCHNEIDER JR.

Therapists: Declare 'Ex-Gay Therapy' Unethical

JIM WALKER

LAST DECEMBER, Leelah Alcorn, a seventeen-year-old transgender girl, committed suicide by walking in front of a tractor-trailer in Ohio. Before her death, she blogged that she would rather die than be forced to continue "conversion therapy." Her suicide moved hundreds of thousands of people to sign on-line petitions against conversion therapy, also known as "ex-gay therapy" or "reorientation therapy."

News of her death energized many of us to be more proactive in debunking conversion therapy. We are mental health therapists from different disciplines, and we're are aware of how conversion therapy is harmful for teens and adults, causing depression, alienation, and even suicide. We were ardent supporters of the first state law in the U.S. against conversion therapy, which passed in California in 2012. That law was groundbreaking, albeit limited in scope, and so far only one other state, New Jersey, has followed California's lead.

Earlier this year, fourteen major medical and psychological bodies in the UK issued a joint memorandum of understanding declaring conversion therapy to be unethical. Major British organizations from the Royal College of General Practitioners to the Association of Christian Counsellors to the National Health Service of England issued a joint declaration stating that conversion therapy is unethical and harmful. The memorandum states that "Awareness of the prevalence of conversion therapy in the UK grew following the publication of research in 2009 which revealed that one in six psychological therapists had engaged clients in efforts to change their sexual orientation."

Colleagues and I have started asking U.S. medical and psychological organizations to declare conversion therapy unethical. We see what happened in the UK as the beginning of a more comprehensive change in the U.S., and eventually around the world. We would like to see U.S. health provider associations take the next step, as the British have done, and declare with a united voice that conversion therapy is unethical.

U.S. health associations have issued guidelines for therapeutic responses that respect patients' same-sex erotic attractions and gender identity differences. What's needed now is a joint statement affirming that conversion therapy is unethical. It would greatly raise ethical awareness and responsibility nationally, and deeply validate that being LGBT is healthy. When professional associations unite with clear ethical guidelines on mental health issues, they have the power to change professional perspectives and public perceptions. These ethics are the ones that future students will learn in the mental health professions.

Other benefits from a joint statement could ensue. The Southern Poverty Law Center is litigating in New Jersey on the premise that conversion therapy is consumer fraud. That victory would be a major precedent, and a joint declaration would undoubtedly boost the case against this practice. The National Center for Lesbian Rights has a new national campaign underway called #BornPerfect whose aim is to protect youth in every state from conversion therapy. A joint memorandum would go very far indeed in advancing their campaign, too.

There are also worldwide benefits. Self-declared conversion therapists can be found worldwide. Several years ago health provider organizations in Uganda supported that nation's "kill the gays" bill because they were deluded into believing that conversion therapy works. Now that a joint memorandum has been issued by fourteen associations in the UK, this myth has less credibility worldwide. Let us stand shoulder-to-shoulder with the UK organizations and reinforce that message. It might even save a life.

Jim Walker, MA, MFT, is a psychotherapist in private practice in San Francisco. He can be contacted at therapist@lgbtcounseling.com.

Correspondence

Those Not Gay Husbands

To the Editor:

Commenting on your "BTW" squib about the TLC show, *My Husband's Not Gay* [March-April issue], I finally watched the show on my DVR. I was surprised at how open these guys were about their gayness. I thought it was refreshing to see someone try to live such a tightly balanced life.

As to what they got out of it: When the one single guy said he wanted a wife and kids, I had to wonder why he doesn't settle for a husband and kids. Same-sex marriage is legal in Utah, and, as of next year, two men will be able to have a baby without using an egg (it will be done using their stem cells). So they would both be the biological parents. He didn't mention living within religious dictates, so I assume a husband and mutual children might satisfy him.

I did notice that the three married guys married women who were not in their league. I can see why the women settled, as they could not land a straight guy as attractive as their gay husband. I do feel for them, always living on edge and wondering what the husband is really doing when he's off with the boys.

Scott Orrell, Rochester Hills, Michigan

To the Editor:

My Husband's Not Gay was such a bad idea for a TV reality show. And this show was an instant ratings failure, too. Does anybody remember *Boy Meets Boy*? Let's bring that one back—but without the gimmick that some of the fifteen dateable candidates were actually straight, unbeknownst to the show's "main man."

Raymond Banacki, Brooklyn, NY

Get Your Rooneys Straight!

To the Editor:

In Andrew Holleran's assessment of *The Imitation Game* (Mar-Apr 2015), he refers to Keira Knightley's time onscreen as calling to mind "those old Judy Garland-Andy Rooney movies."

Of course, *Andy* Rooney never appeared in a Judy Garland movie. It was Mickey! Time to tune your history gay-dar!

Dean Waller, Seattle

A Distant Mirror

To the Editor,

Readers of Karl Whittington's fascinating article ("Jesus' Penis and the Seed of Faith, March-April 2015) on the cartographic representation of Jesus' penis in a medieval map drawn by Opicinus de Canistris were certainly challenged in making sense of your "flopped" reproductions. I could only understand his piece by viewing the images in a mirror.

Jean-Francois Vilain, Philadelphia

Reply from the Author:

The image was indeed somehow reversed in the publication process. I noticed it when I received the issue, but the drawing is so strange, I didn't think anyone would give it a second thought.

There are two different issues: First, Opicinus wrote the captions facing a number of different directions, so there is no true "top" or "bottom" to the image. Second, the reversal of the image that produced the backward writing was a mistake. However, note that even when printed correctly, *some* of the writing is still backwards!

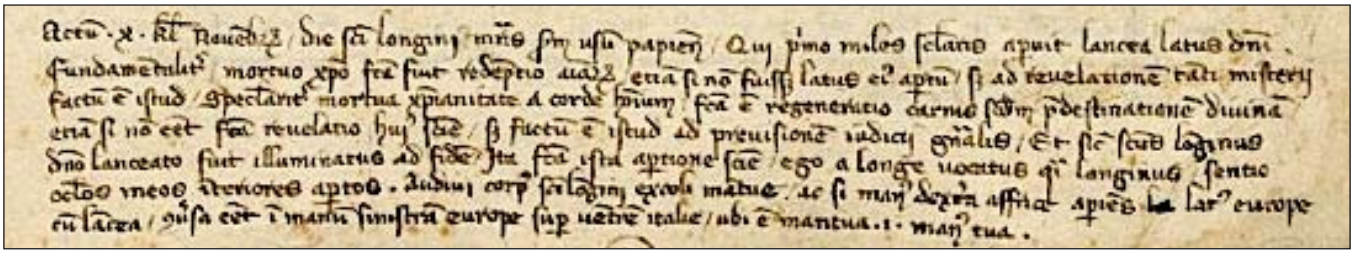
Karl Whittington, Philadelphia

Editor's Note:

In my desire to show the figures right-side-up, I made the mistake of "flipping" the image, which had the effect of reversing the writing. The proper procedure would have been to rotate the image 180 degrees, which also rectifies the map of Europe. By the way, I did notice that the Latin text was reversed but assumed this was some sort of medieval gambit to further encrypt the hidden meanings of this extremely strange and symbol-laden drawing.

So here are two new views of the page in question. At the top is the image as it was received, presumably its orientation in the original codex. The two main figures, Jesus and Mary, are upside-down, though the third figure, the priest/artist himself, disguised as Jesus' penis, is upright, and most of the writing is rectified. Below is the image as I intended to run it, righting the two figures and the map of southern Europe (Italy is clearly visible as Jesus' leg).

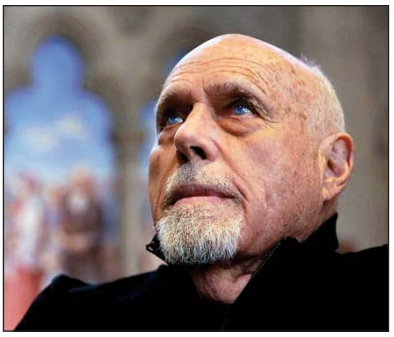
Finally, for you Latin enthusiasts—and I should mention that Mr. Vilain was not the only reader to report on this mistake—below is the most legible of the various passages that run both horizontally and vertically on the page:



Malcolm Boyd, 1923-2015: A Personal Reflection

PHIL WILLKIE

MALCOLM BOYD, an ordained Episcopal priest and the author of two dozen books on matters of religion and gay rights and their intersection, died earlier this year at the age of 91. He received full obituaries in *The New York Times*, *The Los Angeles Times*, among other papers; what follows is a personal reflection on Malcolm and how our lives intersected.



I first met Malcolm Boyd in person at the San Francisco OutWrite conference in 1991. Long before that, he had been an idol of mine. I had read his best seller *Are You Running With Me, Jesus?* (1965), his collection of prayers that spoke to a time of death: it was the height of race riots and the Viet Nam War. Malcolm had been a Freedom Rider and marched with Martin Luther King from Selma to Montgomery in 1965. In 1967, he again marched with King, this time against the Vietnam War and ending at the United Nations building in New York. I also knew that he had come out as gay in the late 1970's with *Take Off the Mask* (1978), where he wrote that "he was tired of living a lie."

I was turned on to Malcolm's famous book in 1969 by Ernie Cowger, my counselor at a psychiatric institution. Ernie was a liberal Baptist seminarian. Two year later, at age of seventeen, while I was visiting Ernie in Atlanta, we went to Ebenezer Baptist Church, where King had preached with his father, known as Daddy King. At that service, the third anniversary of Martin's assassination, Daddy King said he had forgiven the killer of his son. There were soul singers and the choir was lead by Martin's mother. At the conclusion of the riveting two-hour service Daddy King said he had some visitors here today. It was not hard to tell who they were: four whites in a sea of black faces. We were surrounded by members of the congregation, greeted by everyone. Daddy and Mrs. King thanked us for coming. The humility and the sheer conviction of those people were a far stretch from the staid Presbyterian services I knew in Indiana.

In the last twenty years, I regularly saw Malcolm and his life partner Mark Thompson at their mission-style home in the Silver Lake neighborhood of Los Angeles. Typically we would drink martinis and devour hors d'oeuvres while sitting in front of their roaring fireplace. They'd met in 1984 when Mark interviewed Malcolm for *The Advocate*, for which Mark was the cultural editor. Malcolm and Mark were about sixty and thirty years of age at the time; I guess sparks flew between them.

Malcolm usually brought up his "Willkie trilogy." In 1940, at the age of seventeen, in Denver, Malcolm volunteered for the presidential campaign of my grandfather, Wendell Willkie. "I was an FDR kind of guy working for his opponent," he told me. But Malcolm was impressed by Willkie's vitality and the energy of his campaign. Malcolm glowed over Willkie's *One World*, published in 1943, which spelled out a vision for world peace. FDR had sent Willkie around the world, to three fronts of World War II: North Africa, Russia, and China.

The next chapter was meeting Helen Willkie at his first parish in Indianapolis. Helen was the third wife of Fred Willkie, Wendell's brother. Helen was 25 years younger. Fred had been put away in a nursing home with senility. They had four children: Fredric, Arlinda, Julia, and Hall. Malcolm had baptized all four and regularly asked about my cousins. Malcolm had been drawn to Helen because of the Willkie association, but he also found her dark and mysterious. One day she asked if he was drawn to men. Without getting an answer, Helen told him he must always repress that desire. Malcolm told this story still trembling as he recalled this crazy woman who could have easily destroyed his reputation.

The final chapter for Malcolm was meeting me, the grandson. He would always greet me with his wide smile, hands touching my shoulders, gripping me with all the strength he could muster. Malcolm had a more traditional faith as an Episcopal priest. My faith is based more on what I have seen and experienced. The world is very small. We each had traveled down similar roads, living in times of crisis and transformation. Putting our different lives together became a circle.

Phil Willkie is a writer based in Minneapolis.

BTW

A Star Is Born The time has come to bid farewell to Congressman Aaron Schock, the Illinois Republican who's no stranger to this column due to his flamboyant personal style and his horrible voting record on GLBT issues. Schock abruptly resigned from the House in March after various irregularities of a financial nature were disclosed. There were padded expense accounts and improper junkets, maybe a diverted campaign contribution or two, but nothing all *that* unusual for Washington. Clearly what did Schock in was the way he'd decorated his

D.C. office to resemble a room on the BBC series *Downton Abbey*. Diverted funds can be concealed, but once the *Downton* office came to light—the story was broken by a *Washington Post* reporter who managed to snap a few photos before Schock's staff stepped in—reporters and oversight committees began to investigate his other extravagances (the exotic trips, the fancy cars), and the jig was up. The mainstream press largely ignored the gay rumors, but Barney Frank had this to say: "Of course he should come out if they're true. If they're not true, he spent entirely too much time in the gym for a straight man." What's odd is how blasé Schock himself seemed about the whole turn of events. He must secretly know that now that he's famous, there's a wide world of pop-culture celebrity out there—just ask Sarah Palin. Schock sponsored zero bills in Congress, but those soft-core photo shoots for *Men's Health* and the workout videos generated a huge following on Twitter and Instagram. So perhaps the whole Congress thing was just a kind of reality show for Schock with which to launch his media career. He's got the looks for it, so why not? Prediction: Schock *will* come out as gay, which will only enhance his marketability as a workout guru or fashionista or reality-show host on cable TV. Stay tuned!

Gimme Shelter Bloggers and Facebookers tittered (and twittered) about an item in an Alaska newspaper, *The Juneau Empire*, running under the headline "Glory Hole Rededication" and picturing a priest announcing the relaunch of a Christian shelter for homeless men. The launchers were presumably unaware of the double meaning, which earned them the epithets "naïve" and "clueless" in the blogosphere. In their defense, one could argue that the word "glory" had religious overtones long before it acquired its gay meaning, which is undoubtedly why it was chosen in the first place (it's called camp). Of course, it's always possible that these guys are actually winking their way to the tearoom; otherwise, it's not entirely clear why Alaskan clergymen should be up on urban gay lingo.

Twirl of Fate Boston's GLBT community exulted when for the first a gay group was permitted to march in the annual St. Patrick's Day Parade through Southie. But rather than boast about their new open-mindedness, the organizers announced—after the fact—that it was all a mistake. It seems they green-lighted "Boston Pride" believing it to be "an offshoot of 'Boston Strong,'" wrote parade organizer Brian Mahoney in the local paper, noting that the parade doesn't exclude gay people but only "displays of controversial ideology." Mahoney was especially rankled when the Pride group showed up twirling rainbow umbrellas: "It was shocking and unauthorized when they appeared at 'G' and Broadway carrying ten to twelve multicolored umbrellas that I would describe as rainbow even though I have been told they 'technically' were not rainbows. Well, how's this? Umbrellas of any sort are not allowed." Something to keep in mind next time it rains on St. Patrick's day in Boston.

Take Me Out Two nouveau stars on cable TV claim they've found a cure for homosexuality: baseball tickets! They're the Benham brothers, Jason and David, and they're the darlings of anti-gay viewers who tune in to HGTV to check out their latest antics. One of their projects is to convince gay viewers to give up their "lifestyle," and they've found that when you reach out to people, they'll respond. For example, they talked to one gay man and learned that he liked baseball, so they got him tickets to a Cubs game and *voilà!* The guy was so moved by their kindness that he stated in a thank-you note that he had decided to go straight. It was all very touching, and the Benham brothers drew out a deep moral lesson. Sure his gayness "made me lose my appetite," said David, "but I simply responded in love." Left unexplored was the possibility that this guy really was, first and foremost, an ardent baseball fan, whether gay or straight, who *really* wanted those tickets. So he meant it when he thanked the Benham boys for reaching out in this way. He just forgot to add: Dudes, you've been punked!

The Tenth Circle There's a newly ordained pastor in Puerto Rico named José Santiago, and he wasn't long on the job before people began posting pictures of a guy who looked remarkably like him—and not just any guy but a well-known gay porn star named Gustavo Arrango. Sure enough, it turns out the two men are one and the same! In his earlier life, Gustavo starred in many films produced by Kristen Bjorn Studios. But that's all behind him now, claims Santiago, who says he found God and left porn seven years ago. People who've observed his sermons say that his mannerisms still spike their gaydar, but Santiago claims to be "ex-gay," and he's even married a woman. Reporting on the conversion, Banaguide.com couldn't resist a wisecrack before showing Arrango at work: "Here are some of the moments in which Santiago may have found God..." And what the scenes show is that Arrango specialized in two things: playing the receptive partner in anal sex and participating in huge orgies. To put this into a Christian context, his sins were not confined to sodomy but included group sex, exhibitionism, prostitution, and extreme lust. Dante would have had to create a whole new circle of hell! In the context of ex-gay therapy, most alums say they weren't "cured" even a little, so the trip from Gustavo Arrango to Father José is quite an impressive leap indeed.

Roman Holiday

Andrew Holleran

Michael Mewshaw's memoir of Gore Vidal opens like *The Rocky Horror Picture Show*: an innocent young couple in a vehicle are about to meet someone monstrous. Only in this case it's not Doctor Frank N. Furter; it's "Gore Vidal," Mewshaw thinks as he sits on the cross-town bus in Rome, "renowned for his acerbic wit and cutting remarks about those who didn't measure up to his exacting standards. Having watched him on television ... I preferred not to imagine the mincemeat he might make of an American couple in Rome for a year with their six-month-old son."

But Vidal is warm and welcoming, and the Mewshaws are soon part of the American expatriate colony to which Vidal and his partner Howard Austen happily belong. More than anything else, Mewshaw's *Sympathy for the Devil* is a nostalgic love letter to Rome, and that is what makes it so very readable—that and the endlessly quotable Gore Vidal. Vidal's own memoir of Rome—his essay "Some Memories of the Glorious Bird and Others"—doubles as a review of Tennessee Williams' own memoirs, and it begins with a picture of the city when Vidal and Williams had just arrived there after the Second World War. Mewshaw tells Vidal that he's reviewing Williams' *Memoirs*—which he finds full of self-pity and bad writing—and Vidal asks to be loaned the galleys; several weeks later, Mewshaw finds Vidal's essays in *The New York Review of Books*. From the start, they are fellow writers.

Williams never became a resident of the Eternal City, but Vidal and Mewshaw did, and that, really, is the story of this book. It was a time when apartments were cheap (Vidal's starts out at $420 a month and, decades later, balloons to $4,000) and the city, while crowded with cars, had not yet become polluted. Indeed, Mewshaw doesn't even mind getting stuck in traffic jams because the views out the bus window are so beautiful. And there are a lot of American writers passing through the city, many under the aegis of the American Academy in Rome—writers like John Horne Burns, William Styron, Pat Conroy, Donald Barthelme, and Gay Talese, writers we associate with a kind of middlebrow literary culture whose importance has shrunk, if not vanished, since then.

But the main reason Vidal chose Rome, he says in an interview, is "because I didn't want to become an alcoholic, basically. They are all there [in the U.S.] for some reason. Fitzgerald, Hemingway, and Faulkner are the classic examples, but it didn't stop with them." Another reason, as we've already learned from *In Bed with Gore Vidal*, Tim Teeman's recent book about Vidal's sex life, is the availability of hustlers. The first big event Mewshaw experiences with Vidal as a resident of Rome is the murder of Pier Paolo Pasolini by a hustler Pasolini had picked up at the train station—precisely where Vidal and his partner Howard Austen found theirs. When Barbara Grizzuti Harrison asked Vidal about Rome—"Is it the colors that you love? Is it the quality of the light? Is it the warmth of the people?" Vidal replied: "Well, what I like—you have to understand I came here shortly after World War II. What I like is you could go up to the Pincio at night and buy any boy that you wanted for five hundred lire."

Vidal, says Mewshaw, "like a lot of expats—I don't exclude myself—treated Italy as a luxury hotel he could check in and out of as it pleased him." Later on, there would be the "years of lead"—the kidnapping and murder of the Italian premier, Aldo Moro, by the Red Brigades—but at first, life in Rome is good. Mewshaw becomes a frequent visitor at the Vidal-Austen penthouse in an old palazzo, where, we learn, Howard and Gore refer to their houseboy by one of two terms: either "hashish" or "LBP" (Little Brown Person). The word "faggot" is tossed around as well, as when Vidal calls his agent "a little faggot too weak to stand up to" his editor in New York. But then, everyone seemed to use the "F" word then, even William Styron, to Vidal's face, when Styron claimed that writers who are "fags" have an advantage because they don't have to support a wife and family.

Mewshaw says he wants to show that the cool, aristocratic, imperturbable grandee was also a hard-working, sentimental, generous, and loyal friend.

Despite the lunches, dinners, parties, and gossip, Vidal turns out book after book. "Why do you push yourself so hard?" Mewshaw asks him in one of several interviews Vidal grants him. "Do you feel guilty when you're not working?"

"Of course," Gore replies. "After all, I am a puritan moralist."

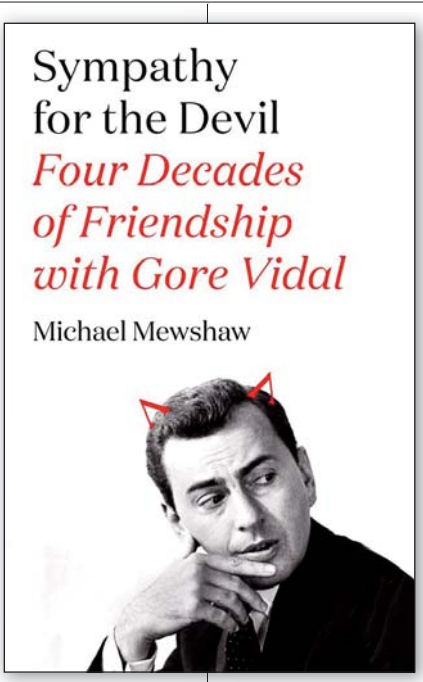
That's one of the things that many people did not get about Vidal; and what people did not get about Vidal is precisely what Mewshaw says he wants to show in his book—that the cool, aristocratic, imperturbable grandee was also a hard-working, sentimental, generous, and loyal friend who, "while he preferred to pass himself off as a stoic à la Marcus Aurelius ... was frequently quite the opposite—irascible, brusque, angry, depressed to the point of suicidal ideation."

Vidal is full of contradictions. The puritan moralist and his partner even make annual trips to Bangkok "in our relentless pursuit of AIDS," says Gore. Not too relentless, evidently: when the dying Rudolf Nureyev comes for a visit from his own Italian island to Vidal's villa in Ravello (as in *The Milk Train Doesn't Stop Here Anymore*) and takes a swim in Vidal's pool, they are warm hosts, but he and Austen have it emptied afterwards

Andrew Holleran's novels include Dancer from the Dance, The Beauty of Men, *and* Grief.

in case chlorine is not enough to kill the virus. And Vidal and Austen remain healthy and Rome golden. Soon the Mewshaws are going to parties at Vidal's place filled with actors, priests, film directors, writers, and male models—the sort of party we all wish we'd gone to, in a city we wished we'd live in, particularly at that time.

And then, as time passes, things begin to change—for reasons that are never quite explained. All Mewshaw writes is: "As the rest of us enjoyed the sweet life, Gore increasingly seemed glum and off-kilter. … Death was more and more on his mind as he approached sixty, and a parallax yawned between his handsome, haughty persona and the paunchy, disconsolate man he was turning into." For one thing, it was the booze. "In addition to great quantities of wine, he consumed Rabelaisian amounts of Scotch and vodka. The old cautionary tales about hard liquor, and his disdain for contemporaries whose careers had been wrecked by alcohol, no longer played any part in his repertoire. When warned that with his high blood pressure he had better cut back on drinking, he said that he would rather die."



But what caused this? Simply the loss of youth, the specter of old age, the failure of his own success to match what he had hoped for? (Vidal had serious political ambitions.) Mewshaw thinks Vidal suffered for years from unacknowledged depression. At a certain point we learn that even the hustlers no longer helped. "Don't tell me you can still get it up," Vidal accuses a friend. "I need real technicians now, not street trade." At the same time he started blabbing about sex at elegant dinner parties—talking about his ancestors' genitalia, asking the women at a dinner party what they think of anal sex. The irony, Mewshaw writes, is that "for all his coruscating chatter about sex, Gore struck me as one of the least sensuous, least tactile men I ever met. Despite a drawling, relaxed voice, he was physically rigid, coiled. ... In his essay 'Pornography' he wrote that 'an effort must be made to bring what we think about sex and what we say about sex and what we do about sex into some kind of realistic relationship.' In his own life, however, he never appeared to come close to achieving that harmony."

Tim Teeman's *In Bed with Gore Vidal* is about contradictions as well, though it purports to be a study of Vidal's take on sex. Mewshaw's memoir is simply richer and more rounded; he knew Vidal for decades. In *Sympathy for the Devil* we see Vidal in Rome, in the villa in Ravello to which he moved after Rome became too expensive and polluted, on a book tour in London, at a literary seminar in Key West, and home in Los Angeles; and we see him over time. We watch the man who, when Vidal and Mewshaw got to Rome, didn't drink hard liquor. By the time the book is over, Vidal is downing Scotch and vodka throughout the day, but to Mewshaw's amazement he seems never to have a hangover, and he always gets up the next day to deliver the article or interview as promised.

So, inevitably we end up in the same place we do in the Teeman book: with alcoholism and decline. "I have no intention," Mewshaw writes in his preface, "of producing what Joyce Carol Oates [the three saddest words in the English language, according to Vidal] has described as a 'pathography'—the kind of lurid postmortem that dwells on an author's deterioration." The fear that he *is* producing a pathography, however, seems to haunt him: "Perhaps Gore Vidal should be permitted to rest in his grave, confident that neither I nor anyone else will reveal what he was actually like. But in the case of a writer whose work and character have so often been misrepresented, I'm convinced that there needs to be a corrective portrait." And that would have to deal with the fact that "alcohol, massive amounts of it consumed over decades, did him incalculable damage, ravaging his physical and psychological equilibrium. This, it might be argued, was his private business. But because drinking undermined his work and his public persona, I believe that this topic and his long-standing depression deserve discussion." Okay. But dandruff?

Vidal's dandruff first appears in a description of the great man in a bookstore in London as Mewshaw waits in line to have a book signed. Howard Austen, he writes, looks "drawn and pale. ... Gore, who had turned seventy in October, didn't look much better. His shirt buttons were stretched to the popping point, and

his blazer hung open, exposing a swagged belly. His shoulders were dotted with dandruff, and his parchment-dry skin had a permanent crease on the right cheek." Later, when Mewshaw and his wife had been invited for dinner: "Howard and Gore were drunk when Linda and I joined them in their suite at the Connaught. Room service had sent up a magnum of Veuve Clicquot and a pot of caviar, much of which dribbled down Gore's shirtfront, along with hard-boiled egg yolk and toast crumbs."

"Whom the gods would destroy, they first put hair on their backs," Vidal once joked when speaking of Israelis, but dandruff seems below the belt. I suppose one could say that it's a measure of Mewshaw's love for Vidal, his reverence for Vidal's accomplishment and brilliance, that makes the details of his physical decline all the more horrific to him. Or it's just a good writer's eye for physical detail. Or the fact that decline is more dramatic than success. There is something Lear-like in Vidal's long suicide by alcohol, his wish to die, his turning to sentimental reveries about the prep school student Jimmy Trimble, who he claimed was the love of his life (a myth, both Teeman and Mewshaw conclude), his increasingly tacky behavior and offensive remarks. But that dandruff makes one wonder whether Mewshaw's stated goal of showing the kind, conflicted, vulnerable man behind the mask Vidal presented to the world has not been overtaken by the same inevitable Grand Guignol in which Teeman's book is steeped, though Mewshaw's is much better written, with a skilled writer's eye for anecdote, punch line, and description of scene.

At the Key West Literary Seminar, to which Mewshaw had been given the assignment of attracting Vidal, there's more when his old friend arrives: "A sad, shrunken doll in a rumpled blue blazer with an antimacassar of dandruff around his shoulders, he wore stained sweatpants and bright white tennis sneakers and sat slumped to one side in his wheelchair, as if the bones had been siphoned out of his body."

Vidal's behavior at the Key West Literary Seminar is so bad, it's hilarious—he's the nightmare guest whose presence induces chiefly dread in his hosts: Can he get through it? At an inaugural party at an art gallery, when the owner says, "Here's someone I'm sure you'd like to meet, Mr. Vidal. Joy Williams," Vidal replies, "Why would I want to meet Joy Williams?" When one of the town's leading lights, a man who has told Mewshaw he's looking forward to meeting the writer Tennessee Williams introduced him to years ago, says to Vidal: "Gore, what a pleasure to see you after all these years," Vidal replies, "I've never seen you before in my life." And when a generous donor to the Seminar comes over to talk to him, Vidal barks "for somebody to 'get this drunken cross-eyed cunt out of my face.'" Not your dream panelist, though Vidal went on to be filmed by C-SPAN in conversation with his literary executor Jay Parini and later in the year addressed the British Parliament and the legislature in Turkey, and conferred on a revival of his play *The Best Man* before dying of pneumonia in Los Angeles not long after that.

In other words, though much better written, more interesting, and more readable, Mewshaw does not come out in a place very far from Teeman's gothic amalgam of interviews with Vidal's caretakers conducted not long after his demise. So how does Mewshaw end up with something very close to a pathography after all? Is it just Vidal himself that makes it inevitable? Or is it the strange tax we levy on people who achieve great things? Or the difference between being straight and gay? In the end, the Mewshaws still seem like the young couple in *The Rocky Horror Picture Show*, or for that matter *Who's Afraid of Virginia Woolf?* They, and many of Vidal's friends, have had to put up with an awful lot. But when it's over, the Mewshaws divide their time among London, Rome, and Key West, the parents of two grown sons and a grandchild, while Vidal has died a crazy drunk in a wheelchair.

So he drank himself to death; so what? (Or rather, would it not be interesting to wonder why at sixty he began wishing to die?) Is there an explanation for it? Does it have anything to do with his genius, or was it just alcoholism? In this case, it's neither irrelevant nor explained. But surely we don't read about Vidal because he died with wet brain. As with John Lahr's recent biography of Tennessee Williams, *Sympathy for the Devil* portrays the tortured personality, the conflicts, the turmoil behind the public mask; but we never get what made both of these men the writers they were. Like Williams, Vidal was so witty, so quick, so sharp, he deserved a Boswell; instead we get these secondary figures who intersected with them as interviewers and survived to chart their terrible decline. Mewshaw's memoir succeeds in its goal of showing us the variegated moods and aspects of Vidal's character; but what do he and Lahr want of their subjects, perfect mental health? It's a bit like Orson Welles' speech in the movie *The Third Man* (to condense): Renaissance Italy produced murder, the Borgias, Michelangelo, and Leonardo. Switzerland had five hundred years of democracy and peace and produced the cuckoo clock.

Jim Farley talks with the co-founder of Against Equality

No 'Equality' without Social Justice

Ryan Conrad

RYAN CONRAD is an artist, activist, and scholar whose politics challenge what he sees as assimilationist tendencies in the mainstream GLBT movement. He's also the co-founder of Against Equality (AE), a collective of GLBT activists, and editor of their recently published book, Against Equality: Queer Revolution, Not Mere Inclusion. *Conrad has contributed to scholarly and activist publications such as* American Quarterly, Socialism & Democracy, In These Times, *and* Fifth Estate, *and his artwork has been exhibited in Europe, Asia, and North America.*

Speaking on behalf of the five-member group, Conrad describes it as a collective that's "committed to undermining a stunted conception of equality." Rather than seek inclusion in institutions that they see as classist, racist, patriarchal, and heterosexist—the military, the institution of marriage, and the prison system—Against Equality seeks to challenge the current GLBT movement's status quo by providing a clearinghouse for alternative viewpoints. What unites their analysis is a discourse that's unapologetically anti-capitalist, anti-imperialist, and anti-patriarchal. The book Against Equality *is a compilation of three previous anthologies, each of which focuses on one of the three issues that they regard as the sacred cows of contemporary gay politics: gay marriage, gays in the military, and hate crimes legislation.*

The GLR *caught up with Ryan Conrad while he was on a book and lecture tour of Australia and New Zealand. The following interview was conducted online in early March 2015.*

— JF

Ryan Conrad

Gay & Lesbian Review: The name "Against Equality" seems to be a provocation. We assume you mean this in some special sense. Can you explain in what sense you're "against" equality?
Ryan Conrad: The name "Against Equality," as well as our ">" (greater than) logo, demands that we do better than claim an equal stake in deeply inequitable cultural and civic institutions and that we instead demand something better, more just. It's a call for reinvigorating the queer political imagination to conjure and actualize a social and economic justice movement that is on our own terms and not simply the reactionary demand of inclusion, especially when inclusion means reifying deadly institutions that maldistribute life chances like marriage, military, and prisons.

GLR: Thus the problem with these institutions is precisely that they promote inequality. So what you're really saying is that you oppose "equality" as defined (co-opted?) by the Human Rights Campaign and other mainstream organizations, no?
RC: What we are saying is that the entire framework of equality, as espoused by mainstream gay and lesbian rights organizations, as well as the single-issue campaigns it gives rise to, is meaningless because it lacks an economic and intersectional analysis. Speaking in vague ideological terms about "equality" avoids actually talking about the deep inequity inherent in the institutions the HRC and others so desperately want to access.

GLR: Can you talk a little about the collective itself—who you are, how you're organized, and what you're trying to achieve?
RC: As a collective we organize non-hierarchically and with a consensus-based decision-making model. The five of us are based throughout the U.S. and Canada, and we strike a good balance of gender, racial, and non-urban difference among our members. But to be clear, we are not an organization in that we don't have an office, a phone, a budget, an internship/volunteer coordinator, etc. We are first and foremost an archival project, maintaining an online archive of critical textual and visual work. To activate this archival material, we've done a number of publications, cultural projects, and speaking engagements.

GLR: Of the three issues that you've focused on in past publications, same-sex marriage seems to stick most in your craw. In the general introduction to the book, you home in on the Windsor case, in which the Supreme Court overturned DOMA. It was brought by a wealthy lesbian after the death of her partner, and you contend that it was another case of a rich person asserting her privileged status. What troubles you about the push for same-sex marriage?
RC: The argument for or against gay marriage is a distraction from actually addressing the structural inequalities implicit in marriage where conjugal couples benefit from a myriad of privileges (1,138 as outlined by the U.S. General Accounting Of-

Jim Farley is an associate editor of this magazine.

fice in the Defense of Marriage Act) while all other articulations of family and care are penalized. The fervor over the Windsor case demonstrates the level of distraction going on here. What we want is a fully funded social safety net in this country that includes health care, public education, public transportation, access to healthy food, employment opportunities, etc. We will never get these things if our social movements are organized around giving wealthy people, gay or straight, tax breaks on their amassed wealth.

GLR: Chances are the Supreme Court will rule on marriage bans across the USA this June. What outcome are you hoping for?
RC: This summer, when the Supreme Court ushers in a new era of gay marriage bliss for the marrying kind, it will be in some ways a sigh of relief. To be honest, many of us are burned out on this fight draining any and all energy from other battles, from the impacts of austerity on HIV/AIDS service organizations and queer and trans youth organizations, to disproportionate trans incarceration and poverty among our queer and trans communities. Gay marriage will soon be the law of the land, but never in my lifetime will we see universal health care, a well-funded and comprehensive social safety net, or an end to mass incarceration.

GLR: In addition to gay marriage, the book – and your website – focuses on two other issues: the right of LGBT people to serve in the military and the U.S. prison system. Why have you chosen to focus on these three themes?
RC: Inclusion in marriage, military service, and state protections through hate crime legislation have become the cornerstones of gay and lesbian politics over the last three decades. AE focuses on these three themes because they are the defining gay and lesbian political motifs of our era, and we hope to offer a corrective to the assumed consensus that inclusion in these institutions is a worthy goal for a broader queer and trans social and economic justice movement. There is no place for the privileging of one family form to the detriment of others, the imperial and genocidal force that is the U.S. military, or the racist and anti-poor prison industrial complex in any queer future I could imagine fighting for, let alone inhabiting.

It's a call for reinvigorating the queer political imagination to actualize a social justice movement and not simply the reactionary demand of inclusion.

GLR: One rap on *Against Equality* is that it offers a lot of criticism of contemporary society and especially certain institutions but doesn't offer many alternatives. Is this a fair criticism? I found myself agreeing with the basic analysis of many of the essays but disagreeing with some of the conclusions that were reached. For example, although I agreed with much of the analysis of the prison-industrial complex in a piece by Dean Spade, his solution is to abolish the entire prison system. And it's probably true that sexual violence is over-criminalized in the U.S., but this writer seems to advocate that we stop prosecuting all acts of sexual violence. Isn't there a danger of throwing the baby out with the bathwater?
RC: Against Equality offers a lot of criticism of reactionary contemporary gay and lesbian politics without being prescriptive as to what is to be done instead, although a lot can easily be inferred from our archive or individual collective members' activism in their home communities (e.g., queer and trans inclusive universal health care, guaranteed minimum income, massive immigration reform, affordable housing, ending the school-to-prison pipeline, supporting queer and trans young people, etc.). It's important to remember that Against Equality is not an organization, nor is it a movement. We are merely an archive, and I try to be really humble about what we are doing as a collective and what role we play in the broader social and economic justice movements. That being said, I think our archive has been influential to some degree in opening up space for more people to have discussions about what kind of political work can and should be prioritized to benefit the greatest number of queer and trans people. Plus, a vanguardist professional political elite from the gay and lesbian non-profit industrial complex dictating the priorities of a group of people is something we rally against and is a top-down model we aren't looking to recreate.

GLR: Can we talk about the intellectual roots of your thinking and that of the collective? In the book's introduction you describe Against Equality as an "anti-capitalist collective," which suggests a Marxist orientation, while your publisher, AK Press, is known as an anarchist house. Can you offer some background in this area?
RC: A key point of unity among our collective members is that we are all anti-capitalists and all align with feminist, anti-racist, and anti-imperialist ideals. Politically, we all fall somewhere along the anarchist–socialist spectrum, but none of us find it particularly useful to belabor our very small ideological differences when we have so much work to do and share such fertile ground in which to work together.

GLR: There seems to be a utopian strain as well, a desire to tear down the edifice of modern capitalist society and start all over.
RC: Labeling our work as utopian isn't really all that interesting though. What radical political project isn't? Or why would you shoot for anything less? Additionally, how are the economic fanatics that believe the free hand of the market will meet our social needs any less utopian? I'd like to think we are much more pragmatic than capitalists that believe in such ideological buffoonery. So yes, surely we fight for the best possible world for all people, I guess that just makes us paradoxically "practical utopians" or perhaps what Judith Butler has called "provisional anarchism."

GLR: What kind of response have you received, both to the book and to the talks you've been giving in various parts of the world?
RC: Over the last five years, members of Against Equality have given talks about our work in the UK, Australia, New Zealand, and across North America. In the early days of touring with our work, the state-by-state gay marriage battles had really just

begun in the U.S., and the response to us was extreme, from detailed racist death threats sent by angry gay-identified Facebook users to LGBT alumni campus organizations trying to have our events canceled. These examples really demonstrated how little space there was for having the kind of political discussions we, among others, were demanding at the time. Now, as time has passed and more states have legislated gay marriage, the stakes of having the kinds of political conversations we were having have lowered. Unsurprisingly, we are still completely ignored by mainstream gay and lesbian organizations from the HRC to Lambda Literary, but we've accomplished a lot for a small, budgetless project. Internationally, folks are quite receptive to our work and happy to hear a corrective to the singular progress narrative currently exported through various kinds of media by mainstream gay and lesbian organizations.

GLR: Now that the book is out, does AE have any other projects on the front or back burner?
RC: As a collective we are taking stock and reflecting on the last five-plus years of archiving and publishing. We've been touring quite relentlessly to support the distribution of nearly 10,000 books since we started publishing in 2010, and it's rather tiring. We'd really like to do some revisions to our website, perhaps hold a conference, or even work on a book foregrounding the voices of queers from the global south, but right now it seems appropriate to reflect a bit on what we are doing and re-emerge with a fresh vision.

GLR: There's a semi-famous photo of you which was auctioned off a few years ago that reveals almost all of you, with a book covering the fun bits. Just curious: what was the book?
RC: Different forms of sex work, among other forms of underground economies, have been integral to supporting our self-funded project. We are not a non-profit, in fact we are anti-profit, and this means we don't have charitable status, apply for grants, or access other forms of institutional funding. After self-publishing our first three books and selling them nearly at cost, not to mention providing them at no cost to incarcerated queer and trans folks, has meant we accrued a significant amount of debt on credit cards over the years. So to deal with this debt we looked to underground economies in addition to the speaker's fees we charge universities to stabilize our project financially. The photo you are referring to features the second book AE self-published, *Against Equality: Don't Ask to Fight Their Wars*, in just the right position.

GLR: How do you find articles for inclusion in the archive, and how can our readers submit something for possible inclusion?
RC: Our archives are largely generated from user-submitted content. People who visit our website are also the people that have submitted a large amount of work we've archived. Anyone can e-mail a submission of their published work, and once it's vetted by the collective, we'll add it to our on-line archive. We also gather archival material from our very active, but well moderated, Facebook group.

For more information or to submit material to the Archive, visit www.againstequality.org.

The Price of Going Mainstream

DOLORES KLAICH

WOMEN ARE MARRYING WOMEN, men are marrying men; many of either persuasion are, with beatific smiles, pushing baby carriages. One's sister, daughter, wife, mother, brother, son, husband, father, grandmother, grandfather, aunt, uncle, colleagues, friends, and neighbors are not just tiptoeing out of the closet but publicly claiming their gayness in all spheres of life. It is, to be sure, a cultural sea change, and one that seems to have happened overnight, at least from the perspective of mainstream America. Who would have imagined such a state of affairs? Certainly not the early gay and lesbian activists of the Stonewall era, those who have now reached a certain age, the folks, along with those who have passed on, who were at the barricades of the early gay *liberation* movement, years before the alphabet soup of LGBTQ *rights*. Indeed the shift from "liberation" to "rights," which was a slow morphing over the years, is itself emblematic of what has changed.

Assimilation into the social mainstream has moved steadily apace, and with it have come complications that face all minorities: co-optation, tokenism, paternalism, and a veneer of tolerance. What happened to re-imagining and re-inventing social institutions such as marriage and family, hallmarks of early activist groups? It's astonishing to rediscover the mission statement of New York City's Gay Liberation Front, formed in 1969 following the Stonewall Riots, which included the following self-declaration: "We are a revolutionary group of men and women formed with the realization that complete sexual liberation for all people cannot come about unless existing social institutions are abolished." Can we possibly imagine today's dominant LGBTQ rights organizations describing themselves as "revolutionary" and calling for universal "sexual liberation"?

Assimilation has moved steadily apace, and with it the complications that face all minorities: co-optation, tokenism, paternalism, and a veneer of tolerance.

Gay and lesbian folks who aren't old enough to remember either the bad old days or the early days of gay and lesbian liberation—a growing majority at this time—may be overjoyed that they can partake of the fruits of acceptance (however incomplete) into mainstream society. Most are probably oblivious to the vision of meaningful social change that animated the early activists. Let me consider a few of the major areas in which things have undoubtedly changed, but not quite in the ways that were hoped for when the early movement began.

GAY MARRIAGE. I turn first to an interview with the cult filmmaker John Waters and his much quoted line, "I always thought the privilege of being gay is that we don't have to get married or go into the army." And later in this *New Yorker* interview (March 26, 2007) he proclaimed that marriage, an entrenched heterosexual tradition, was a corny and expensive tradition. Of course gay or lesbian marriages can be more than corny and expensive. Just ask the smart, feisty, hot, cute, charming 83-year-old woman, Edie Windsor (straight out of central casting), who put the Supreme Court's feet to the fire in 2013 to strike down a monumentally unfair law, the Defense of Marriage Act (DOMA), thus paving the way for state after state, a veritable domino effect (with attendant backlash), to proclaim gay or lesbian marriage to be okay.

But I wonder, in a country still awash in racism and classism, would an overweight, impoverished woman of color who is lesbian have been as acceptable a plaintiff as was this attractive, wealthy, former IBM executive with a house in the Hamptons? (Full disclosure: Edie is a friend of mine, a kind, loving woman who gives the best hugs around.) One can easily imagine the decision going the other way, which would have been disastrous for lesbians and gay men everywhere. Edie Windsor's undertaking was just plain brave and heroic, and she deserves all the accolades she has garnered. But where in this important scenario is the original vision of the gay, lesbian, and feminist liberation movements, which included a radical agenda of progressive society-wide change, such as a rethinking of the whole institution of marriage, a longing to experiment with a more open-ended, flexible, and varied model for intimate human relationships? As things now stand, one is reminded of the quips by late-night TV hosts when the subject of gay marriage was first in the air: "Sure, I'm all for gay marriage. Why shouldn't they be as miserable as the rest of us?"

THE MILITARY. In 2012 on a military base in Hawaii at a family return-from-duty homecoming celebration, a buff gay Marine—as of September 2011 no longer needing *not* to tell—planted a passionate kiss and a wildly loving hug onto his boyfriend that in minutes went viral on social media sites. One thinks of Judy Grahn, the lesbian poet and activist who in the early 1960s was kicked out of the Air Force for being a lesbian. Or Lenny Matlovich, the highly decorated Vietnam veteran, also kicked out of the military, who became a gay liberation activist and whose tombstone, carved upon his death in 1988, memorably reads: "When I was in the military, they gave me a medal for killing two men and a discharge for loving one." At the same time, as this quotation poignantly reminds us, the military is a very conservative institution, in times of war a "killing machine," participation in which should be problematical for anyone who questions the legitimacy of war in general and re-

Dolores Klaich is writing a memoir of the early days of the gay and lesbian liberation movement.

cent American adventures in particular.

Psychiatry. The most recent American attempt to "cure" homosexuals—after thousands of gay men in the U.S. and the U.K. underwent torturous episodes, as documented by historian Martin Duberman in his 1991 book *Cures* and in the recent movie about mathematician Alan Turing, *The Imitation Game*—is the "ex-gay" movement, which emerged a generation ago and which continues to this day, although with distinct signs of faltering. In 2012, an influential psychiatrist, Dr. Robert Spitzer, who had claimed in a 2003 study that gay individuals could be "cured" through a method called reparative therapy, admitted that the study, which religious fundamentalists had pounced upon to establish "cure" clinics across the country, was "fatally flawed"; and he apologized for promulgating it. And he went on to say, "I believe I owe the gay community an apology," a miraculous statement considering the years of psychiatric damage caused by many, not all, but very many of his colleagues. Not long after Spitzer's apology, a World Health Organization report called his reparative therapy "a serious threat to the health and well-being—even the lives—of affected people." So here's a case of "assimilation"—into the realm of "normal" psychology—that seems to me an unmixed blessing.

As an aside: the headline in a *New York Times* article about Spitzer's apology (May 18, 2012) read: "Psychiatry Giant Sorry for Backing Gay Cure." To see such a headline in the *Times* attests to a revolution in the *Times*' treatment of gays and lesbians over the past many years. It wasn't until 1987, when the powerful—some say tyrannical—heterosexist executive editor Abe Rosenthal left his post at the paper, that things began to change. Before that, even the word "gay" was banned in favor of the more clinical and subtly pejorative "homosexual"; but since then the *Times* has come to be a reliable and powerful booster for all things gay and lesbian, both in the political and the cultural realms.*

Books. These days, bookstore shelves are groaning with gay- and lesbian-themed books of every description: academic studies, literary and not-so-literary novels, poetry chapbooks, mysteries, memoirs—some of them receiving substantial critical attention (not to mention favorable reviews). This is a far cry from 1973 when a group of Philadelphia activists rented a storefront on the city's South Street to establish a gay and lesbian community gathering place in the hope of including a gay and lesbian bookstore. They named that enterprise Giovanni's Room after the James Baldwin novel and displayed what positive written words were then available, which filled only one shelf of one short bookcase. However, over the years the bookstore came to thrive, not always financially but as a center of discussion and activism. In 2014, after 41 years as the nucleus of the city's gay and lesbian community, following the fate of many other independent bookstores, Giovanni's Room closed its doors. *Rolling Stone* magazine, in its May 21, 2014 issue, saluted the store and its longtime activist-owner Ed Hermance. When asked about the store's beginnings and its longevity, Hermance said, "We were working on changing the world. That was our motivation." Such was the dream when this and every other gay and lesbian bookstore came into being; surely their disappearance is an important, and not an altogether happy, development in our cultural history.

The Academy. Moving to the world of academia, one couldn't have imagined a faculty position dedicated to gay and lesbian studies, but in 2009 Harvard University endowed a chair for GLBT studies (the F. O. Matthiessen Visiting Professorship of Gender and Sexuality). But Yale trumped Harvard this time, having failed to endow a similar chair in 1997 but succeeding in 2001. Today, according to College Equality Index, an organization that assists the college search process for prospective LGBT students, there are some forty institutions that offer a minor in queer studies. These victories represent a struggle that started in the 1970s, when graduate students first began to propose topics on gay and lesbian issues in literature and in the social sciences. Even sympathetic faculty members, wary of tenure decisions in their future, would almost always turn their backs on such research. Today scholars are making up for lost time as doctoral candidates are turning out great numbers of dissertations and books on gay and lesbian topics.

Assimilation into a dominant mainstream has always been a thorny issue for minority groups seeking acceptance. It would be cranky to begrudge the millions of gay men and lesbians who have joyfully embraced mainstream values and norms, even at the cost of jettisoning aspects of their lives that don't fit the mold. But there are still many people who question these values and norms, including those who continue to be on the side of re-envisioning more progressive societal constructs by acting to change the status quo, and those who concur with what James Baldwin wrote in *The Fire Next Time* (with reference to racism): "Do I really want to be integrated into a burning house?"

So, far be it from me or anyone else of a certain age to resent those who are now enjoying the fruits of gay liberation in the form of acceptance into mainstream social institutions. At the same time, these folks should be aware of the inevitable backlash against these gains—anti-gay legislation is afoot in many states as I write—and be prepared to fight back against powerful individuals and groups that seek to destroy what has been gained.

* In 1974, according to my literary agent at the time, Rosenthal killed a "rave" review by *Times* staffer Judy Klemesrud of my book *Woman Plus Woman: Attitudes Toward Lesbianism*. Probable reason: not fit to print. It gave me some solace back then to see that a *Boston Evening Globe* editor was not so squeamish, running a "rave" review by Loretta Lotman in the July 14, 1974 issue.

America through a Gay Glass, Darkly

LEWIS GANNETT

LARRY KRAMER'S FIRST NOVEL, *Faggots*, appeared in 1978. Its hero was a sleek gay hunk named Fred Lemish. On the eve of his fortieth birthday, Fred embarks on a quest. He makes the rounds of New York City's sleazier hot spots—the baths, the kink clubs—to find as much sex as he can before tipping symbolically into middle age. But this isn't what Fred really wants. He's tired of mindless sex. In fact, he yearns for romance. Fred wants to settle down with a particular guy he likes, and lead a life of domestic tranquility.

Faggots sold like hotcakes. Heterosexuals saw it as exotic anthropology, many gays enjoyed the attention, and everyone gasped at the lurid sex scenes. But a sizable chunk of the gay public hated the story's moralistic tone. Who was Kramer to pass judgment on those exercising newfound sexual freedoms? Some of his friends shunned him. The local grocery on Fire Island declared him a persona non grata; acquaintances crossed the street to avoid saying hello.

Then the plague hit. The gay world darkened. And Larry Kramer became a prophet.

He went to work on his second novel, and time passed. Reports surfaced every now and then: the new book was to be titled *The American People*. It was about AIDS, and it was about the exclusion of gays from history books. More time passed, but the project remained a mystery. The only fact anyone seemed to know for sure: it would be a tome.

Almost four decades after Kramer's novelistic debut, his follow-up has at last arrived—part of it, that is. *Search for My Heart* is Volume One of the two-volume *The American People*. At 880 pages it is indeed a fatty. Fred Lemish reappears as the protagonist. Once again he takes the reader on a sex tour, this time with a wider focus. Fred has become an expert on the history of sex in North America. He begins with monkeys in prehistoric Florida and closes with carnal politics in 1950s Washington, D.C. He is telling the story of "the underlying condition," also known as the AIDS virus. But it isn't just a medical tale.

Search for My Heart tackles the primordial American theme of assimilation. This is Great American Novel territory, a saga of outsiders working their way in. They're homosexuals, these outsiders, along with Jews and others. It's not a success story, I'm afraid. It's a struggle: a guts-splattered phantasmagoria of loathing and murder, occasionally softened by beams of sunshine. Is that a surprise, coming from Larry Kramer? Perhaps not. However, it's only volume one. And a final prefatory comment about this book: it's savagely, laugh-out-loud funny. Who would ever have imagined that?

Lewis Gannett is completing a book on the early love life of Abraham Lincoln.

KRAMER LOOKS BACK AND ASKS: "What happened?" Enter Fred Lemish, historian—or as he refers to himself, Your Roving Historian (YRH for short). Fred acknowledges that he initially brought limited experience to this role. But that didn't stop him from thinking big. He enlisted the help of professionals, notably Dr. Sister Grace Hooker, Nobel-winning expert on infectious disease, and Dame Lady Hermia Bledd-Wrench, world authority on plagues. Dr. Israel Jerusalem, also a Nobelist, came on board to provide insight into sexuality. This book is full of medical luminaries with fancy names who labor at super-elite institutions and publish in all the best places, such as *The New England Journal of Evil*. Does one get the feeling that Fred and his alter ego are intellectually sniffy?

Fred also sought the help of professional historians. Here he ran into trouble on finding that historians knew little about gay people. Actually, gay history didn't seem to exist at all. Fred conducted his own research, collecting information from disparate sources as best he could. He learned that, in fact, the American past teemed with gay life. But it was invisible. In part this was because gay people had been systematically killed off, ever since Jamestown days in the early 1600s. Fred provides exceptionally gory details about one massacre after another, all of them thoroughly covered up.

> Kramer is making the case that America from earliest times foreshadowed its response to AIDS. ... Our founders were uglier than we imagine.

The censorship extended to the lives of famous men who liked men sexually. It's a lengthy list that includes George Washington, Alexander Hamilton, Benjamin Franklin, Meriwether Lewis, Andrew Jackson, Franklin Pierce, James Buchanan, Abraham Lincoln, James Garfield, Mark Twain, Chester Arthur, General George Custer, and others. Moreover, Fred learned that many of these guys' sex lives got mixed up in skullduggery of one kind or another. Yes, it was dangerous to be gay. What a relief to read that "homosexuality does not appear to be woven into" the assassination of President McKinley, at least. Whew! Others weren't so lucky. For example, John Wilkes Booth had a habit of murdering boy actors after raping them, possibly because he had unresolved issues with his badly deformed penis, which bent to one side at almost a ninety-degree angle.

How good is Fred's evidence? On Benjamin Franklin he cites biographer Stacy Schiff. When Franklin served as American envoy to Paris, according to Schiff, he made "regular late-afternoon visits to a white, canvas-covered barge" on the Seine. Adds Schiff: "Franklin was surely unaware that it was the city's premier gay bathhouse." Fred finds this hard to swallow. Did-

n't Franklin "notice all the naked men cruising on the river?" That's a good question. "This bathhouse stuff," Fred declares, "is of monstrous historical importance. Schiff has a case of what YRH calls Ron Chernowitis, of Doris Kearns Goodwinism, denying a truth writ so large she should choke on it." You do have to wonder: how *did* Schiff shrug off Franklin's daily gay-bathhouse regime?

The American People Volume One: Search for My Heart
by Larry Kramer
Farrar, Straus and Giroux
775 pages, $40.

Or take Meriwether Lewis of Lewis and Clark, who mapped the Louisiana Purchase. "Lewis, a lifelong bachelor for whom the company of other men is more congenial than real life, is ... very much in love with Clark. ... This love will eventually destroy him." Fred upbraids Lewis' biographer, Stephen Ambrose, for failing to see this. "How can any sentient person read anything about Lewis without realizing the man was gay? Not a little bit, not just sometimes, but totally and wholly gay?"

Then there was Samuel Clemens, Mark Twain to his millions of fans. Clemens extolled the "stalwart, muscular, dauntless young men" of the Nevada mining country, "none but erect, bright-eyed, quick moving, strong-handed young giants ... a splendid population." Fred notes that these men outnumbered women eighteen to one. Clemens was the lifelong close friend of a travel writer named Charles Warren Stoddard, "as flamboyantly gay as they came." Fred quotes Clemens: "Charles is tender and he touches me in spirit as well as body." Fred has a lot to say about Clemens' gay love life. But the great author's "well-received" biographer, Ron Powers, is silent on the subject. Indeed, Clemens' "undoubted homosexuality has never been explored by *any* of his biographers."

Wait a second! the hardheaded reader might exclaim. Is any of this really proven? Isn't it all just innuendo, and rather outlandish at that? Maybe it's a good thing that Fred Lemish remains a novelistic creature. He isn't, after all, an actual historian. Precisely, says Lemish. "God save us from the heterosexual historian!"

This is a good place to take a step back and ponder the fact that the evaluation of historical evidence has always been a mysterious business. It's not nearly as clear-cut a process as one might like. Here's an example: Fred modestly omits from his narrative an exchange between Larry Kramer and the late historian David Herbert Donald. It culminated with Kramer remarking that Donald was a "dried old heterosexual prune at Harvard."

The accusation so impressed Donald that he quoted it in his final book, *We Are Lincoln Men: Abraham Lincoln and His Friends*, in which Donald sought to refute claims that Abe and his friend Joshua Speed were sexual lovers. A line of evidence that Donald cited was this: in the American 19th century, gay sex affairs "were not merely infrequent; they were against the law." Donald went further, pointing out that the historical record contains love letters between 19th-century male adolescents: "The letters between such male lovers are full of references to sleeping together, kisses, caresses, and open longing for each other. There can be no doubt that these were erotic relationships, but with rare exceptions, they do not appear to have been sexual relationships." Oh really? And what is this based upon?

These letters don't support Donald's claim that gay sex was rare in the days of Lincoln, but they very strongly favor the opposite conclusion. Notes between teenage "lovers" talking about bedtime and kisses and caresses and open longings? If that isn't what we call a "smoking gun," what is?

What would it take to persuade straight historians that Sam Clemens had gay affairs in the Wild West? We could start by pointing to the lopsided male-female population ratio and talk about typical sexual behavior in hypermale environments such as prisons or the open seas. Next, review Clemens' tributes to lads' beauty in the Nevada mining camps. Work up to attested intimacies between Clemens and Charles Stoddard and other men. Would that put homosexuality on the table for these historians? Probably not.

But why not? How can evidence add up to such different things for the gay eye and the straight? At one level the answer is obvious: in some circumstances gay observers know what to

look for, straight ones not so much. The same applies to evidence concerning any particular background: natives have a keener sense of their own kind. But this cliché doesn't take us very far. Fred Lemish points to something more serious: the fact that straight scholars can't even get the implications of a gay bathhouse in Paris.

If *Search for My Heart* were a movie, it would undoubtedly receive the most restrictive rating. How restrictive do ratings get? This movie would rate off the charts. Imagine crashing dreamscapes painted by a psychotic Marc Chagall. Imagine scenes too fiendish to film, too hardcore to show. For instance: "Dr. Dye then severs the penis, the scrotum and testicles. He flips the body over and eviscerates the various canals utilized in anal sex from the kid's rear end. He labels the parts and freezes them and locks them in a thermal chest."

Extreme as this is, Kramer goes there with a certain logic in mind. He's making the case that America from earliest times foreshadowed its response to AIDS, and indeed facilitated the development of AIDS. He wants to show that America was capable of such things. Our founders were uglier than we imagine. White America hated Indians, blacks, Jews, gays, hated the incoming frail and helpless and diseased, loathed the weirdoes from backwater Europe. Fondly though we cherish Ellis Island, there was mass murder from day one. We perfected internment camps at secret locations in Idaho and exported them to the Nazis. We assembled high-tech lists of "those deemed worthy of riddance." After World War II we imported German scientists and their mad new medical formulas, projects that Rockefeller and Ford had seeded. Within it all an entity has lurked: the virus, one gathers. It tirelessly observes, and learns.

Without using the lingo, Kramer suggests something quite plausible: that history is a series of post-traumatic stress disorders. His portrait of postwar Washington revises the notion of that era's triumphalism, darkening it to reflect a people who can't fathom the atrocities they've committed. They don't remember their past very well—including the war they've just fought—because it's just too horrible. As to building Auschwitz prototypes in Idaho: let's see how that theme plays out in Volume Two.

A stylistic element deserves a word. Characters have fantastical names: Horatio Dridge, Anushkus Rattlefield, Evvilleena Stadtdotter, Hadrianna Totem, the Masturbov tribe. Also, many real names take new forms. Yale is "Yaddah," *The New York Times* is *The New York Truth*, Glaxo Wellcome is now "Greeting." Substitutions like these pervade the story, giving it the air of an alternate world co-captained by George Orwell and Ronald Firbank. The effect is whimsical, which concentrates the horror. Or does it dilute the horror? Readers will have different reactions. The odd names help with keeping track of who's who—and this book contains a cast of thousands.

My favorite character is a boy named Daniel Jerusalem. Daniel is the least crazy person here, the dreamiest, the wittiest. At age thirteen he gets a crush on Mordy Masturbov, whose titanically rich father owns Masturbov Gardens, an apartment complex where the Jerusalems live thriftily in suburban Washington. Daniel says this about Mordy:

> Mordecai Masterbov is the first person I know I want to fall in love with and have love me back. I want to touch him all over. He has skin like marble. He has skin like velvet. He has skin I desperately want to touch. He looks like the Greek statues in the Mellon Gallery downtown, which I pretend is where I live, walking regally down the majestic staircases in the empty mammoth halls, going into rooms to stare at Roman and Greek men with lost penises.

Daniel gets into all kinds of situations with Mordecai and an amusingly self-possessed girl named Claudia. They discover things in ever-proliferating tunnels under the ever-expanding Masturbov Gardens outside the rapidly growing capital of booming 1950s America. What lovely, disturbing adventures they have; but little do they know what's in store. At halftime in this brilliantly written story, neither do we. Whatever is coming, it clearly will be astounding.

Songs

BY ANTÓNIO BOTTO

1

Continually
You come speak to me
About the triumph of your youth
Sung
And revealed by me
To those—
Who then opened the market
To your flesh nibbled
In the secrets of lust...

I understand perversity...

I understand it, my friend;
And, I also understand
—I forgot, excuse me...,
I made an oath, I say no more.

(from *Dandismo* [Dandyism])

2

Tall, with brown hair,
And the slender, abbreviated mouth
Recalls an exotic flower
Already a bit faded...
The proportioned body
Of a Greek statue; the voluptuous
And pausing gait
Like a certain aching melody
On a violin...
The long, beautiful hands,
And a smile in the eyes
—That gentle, feline gaze

TRANSLATED BY JOSIAH BLACKMORE

Doug Ireland's Passion and Praxis

MARTIN DUBERMAN

What follows is the introduction to a forthcoming collection of Doug Ireland's essays, edited by the author of this piece, titled The Emperor Has No Clothes: Doug Ireland's Radical Voice *(Boerum Hill). The book is available at www.Amazon.com.*

WHO WAS DOUG IRELAND, and why is he held in esteemed memory? He grew up with few advantages, had few breaks in life. A large, ungainly child, his impoverished parents were pious followers of Christian Science and refused to provide their son with the usual inoculations. At age ten, Doug became one of the last children to contract polio—so severely that he had to have an emergency tracheotomy and remained confined to an iron lung for a full year; for the rest of his life he suffered from muscular degeneration and bouts of respiratory illness. As the novelist Edmund White has suggested (in *City Boy*), it was "perhaps not coincidentally [that] Doug became a militant atheist."

He also became an omnivorous reader. Never encouraged to go to college (though in 1965 he took a few courses at the left-leaning Goddard College in Vermont, including a class called "Contemporary Radical Thought"), he read his way through books with the kind of zeal that most boys of his generation invested in baseball cards. In particular, he devoured works of history and as an autodidact became more learned—but much less dutiful—than many with advanced degrees. He believed the past held lessons for the present and that we were obligated to apply them in active engagement with the unjust world around us. Nothing angered Doug more than complacency in the face of deprivation.

He believed the past held lessons for the present and that we were obliged to apply them in active engagement with the unjust world around us.

At an early age, he enrolled ardently in the struggle against inequality. While still a teenager, Doug became a New Leftist; by 1963, straight out of high school, he devoted himself both to the black struggle and to Students for a Democratic Society (SDS), the radical student organization. Robb Burlage, one of the leading figures in SDS (and himself the son of working-class parents), picked up on Doug's passionate intelligence and deep aversion to hypocrisy, became a kind of mentor to him, and enlisted him in the electoral-politics wing of SDS, which was then focused on defeating the presidential campaign of Barry Goldwater. Others soon picked up on the young firebrand's acuity and at age seventeen Doug was elected to the SDS National Council.

Following Goldwater's defeat in 1964, Doug redirected much of his energy to working for SNCC (the Student Nonviolent Coordinating Committee), once getting arrested at a SNCC-sponsored mass civil disobedience action to desegregate an amusement park in Maryland. After SNCC turned towards "Black Power" and urged its white members to organize their own communities against segregation, Doug shifted more of his energy to mobilizing against the escalating war in Vietnam. Throughout the '60s, he worked as well with various labor groups (the UAW and the New Jersey Industrial Union Council) and on several national Democratic campaigns—including Eugene McCarthy's anti-war bid for the presidency in 1968. That led directly to stints as the successful campaign manager for the antiwar Congressional candidacies of Allard Lowenstein and, in 1970, Bella Abzug. By then he'd reached the hoary age of 24, had come out as a gay man, and had developed a reputation as a skillful political operative with a developing network of contacts.

Doug's relationship with Bella Abzug is worth lingering over for its insight into his candor and unimpeachable integrity. He adored Bella for her pragmatic radicalism, her tireless crusades for issues she cared about, and a directness matching his own. He was thrilled when she became the first major political figure to embrace gay rights and to campaign actively for gay votes. Throughout the '50s, as Doug put it, Bella had "fought the McCarthyites toe to toe in that dark hour when the establishment liberals sponsored their own book burnings and witch hunts, saving themselves from the reactionaries by capitulating to them." When the two of them went together to an emotional Carnegie Hall tribute to an absent, ailing Paul Robeson on the occasion of his 75th birthday, they had to share a box of Kleenex. Bella wasn't part of what Doug disparagingly called "the satisfied middle class." She was, as Doug put it, "too crudely full of life, too much the peasant for our homogenized modernity; in the rawness of her passions lies a reminder of where we came from."*

Bella's character, as Doug once shrewdly put it, had been "shaped in a different time. ... [She was] a product of the immigrant-bred New York Jewish Left, the daughter of refugees from Russian ghetto life." He was well aware that Bella's abrasive personality and her "capacious ego" could make her difficult to deal with (after one argument they stopped speaking for months). When she ran for mayor of New York City in 1977, Doug didn't hesitate to criticize her in *New York* magazine for

Martin Duberman's latest book is Hold Tight Gently: Michael Callen, Essex Hemphill, and the Battlefield of AIDS *(New Press), a Finalist this year for both the Lambda and Randy Shilts Awards.*

* Quotations from: "Democratic Dogfight," *New York*, Sept. 5, 1977; "Trying to Think," *Soho Weekly News*, Jan. 26, 1978; and "The Meaning of Bella's Loss," *Soho Weekly News*, Feb. 23, 1978.

"toning down her style to strike what she conceives to be a mayoral demeanor ... while the spirit is still there, too often she has sounded false and vague."

He was even tougher on three of the candidates who outpolled her. He dismissed the incumbent Abe Beame as "hopelessly bereft of substance"; excoriated Mario Cuomo (the eventual runner-up) for remarking that "we're at a point now in society where you have to be as primitive as talking about how we lock up the animals [i.e., blacks] who threaten us"; and denounced the winner, Ed "Fast Eddie" Koch, who—after the famous blackout that summer and the citywide looting that followed—shifted to a "law and order" platform and was rewarded for his shameless "right-left fan dance" with victory. Doug's wit was as razor-sharp as his intellect: on another occasion he referred to Cuomo (who in general he admired) as "a politician able to hide behind his own candor." And of Koch he made the devastating comment: "I refute the fact that Ed Koch is a closet gay man. He is a closet human being."

STARTING IN THE MID-'70s, Doug increasingly felt that his talents and his opportunity to influence events lay not in direct-action politics but in journalism. As he put it in one of the first of many articles for the then hip, now defunct, *SoHo Weekly News* (Jan. 26, 1978):

> I used to be in the politics business. Running campaigns for people. Helping them ornament their public personalities, and ordering their person, private and public agendas, and like that. ... The politics business is, after all, a trade based upon the manipulation of people. So those skilled at [it] ... are usually quite adept at ordering their own personalities in such a way as to mask completely their own real identities ... people who would like to be nice people but don't quite know how—and [also] people whose closets are entirely empty: there's nobody home at all.

He worked briefly for a wire service, then got hired at *The New York Post* in its pre-Murdoch days, when Dorothy Schiff was still the owner and it had the reputation for being the most liberal paper in the country. In addition to writing for the radical *SoHo Weekly News*, he went on to become, for seven years, the chief media critic for what was then another genuinely alternative source of news, *The Village Voice*. Over time he would write as well for *New York*, *In These Times*, the *L.A. Weekly*, *The Nation*, *POZ*, and, later still, the on-line site *Tom Paine.com*. Overseas—he lived for most of the '80s in France—he wrote for *Libération* and for the investigative blog *Bakchich*.

A long list of publications, yet Doug never found a true home in any of them. One reason was that he insisted on writing about the struggle for gay equality, though editors and friends would admonish him, telling him that it would hurt his credibility as a journalist: "We want you to be taken seriously" is a line Doug often heard. It reminded him of André Gide's response to friends who tried to dissuade him from publishing *Corydon*, his pioneering treatise on homosexuality. Gide would quote Ibsen: "Friends are dangerous not so much from what they want to make you do, but because of what they want to prevent you from doing."

Also at issue was Doug's combative refusal to dilute his commitment to radical politics. Micah Sifry, Doug's editor at *The Nation*, recalls that "it was often a struggle to get his writing" into the magazine. During the Clinton administration, Sifry adds, "Doug's politics were to the left of the magazine's. It was not a happy relationship. There was a time when everyone expected Doug to be the next Jimmy Breslin, but he couldn't be the next Jimmy Breslin because he was too true to his principles and wouldn't cut those corners."

John Berendt, Doug's editor—and lifelong friend—at *New York*, tells a similar story. Doug published less than a handful of pieces in the magazine, his tenure cut short over a political spat. He was part of a team effort putting together a feature piece about Andrew Stein, then running for Manhattan Borough president, when Stein's influential father, Jerry Finkelstein, got wind of Doug's participation and raised hell about what he assumed was going to be a hatchet job. Finkelstein was given "assurances"—and Doug resigned in protest.*

If the press lords as a group found Doug toxic, many of his fellow reporters valued him highly. Bruce Shapiro recalls first meeting Doug in 1981 when he was "holding court in the conference room at *The Nation*." Its editor-in-chief, Victor Navasky, had enlisted Doug's help in putting together an American Writers Congress based on similar leftwing gatherings in the 1930s. Shapiro also worked on that Congress and remembers Doug as "an immense, rumpled, bespectacled owl ... regaling a tableful of interns and editors" with sardonic yarns, "gleefully report[ing] every ancient sectarian faction fight, sexual imbroglio and barroom brawl in New York, inviting us to picture the blood-and-feathers mayhem that would ensue if Novelist A was put on a panel with Historian B." Alternately, Doug held court at Jimmy's bar, the Lion's Head (a favorite hangout for journalists) and Elaine's, the celebrity mecca. At all of them Doug ate, drank, and talked with flamboyant enthusiasm.†

Micah Sifry emphasizes the serious side of Doug's Falstaffian conviviality: "He was probably the most knowledgeable person I had encountered on the ins and outs of New York politics and national politics. I was always learning at his knee." The writer Christopher Hitchens ("Hitch") was another profound admirer. When they met in the late '70s, Doug was one of the few mainstream journalists who'd come out as openly gay. That took guts in a notoriously homophobic profession and Hitch admired him for it. He made a point of telling Doug that the most emotionally intense—and sexual—relationship of his

* Revealed to me by John Berendt in an e-mail dated March 27, 2014.

† Bruce Shapiro's "Remembering Doug Ireland" appeared in *The Nation*, Nov. 2, 2013.

own life had been with another teenage boy at school.

In sharing that confidence, Hitch opened up a level of trust with Doug which was never shaken thereafter, even when Hitch, to Doug's horror, defended the invasion of Iraq. The two men had much else in common: both were socialists, militant atheists, and incisive wits, and often they'd leave parties together and continue to drink and talk through the night. Doug went through Hitch's painful divorce from his first wife, and Hitch, in turn, was there for Doug during one of the darkest periods in his own life—the death of his beloved companion Hervé Couergou.*

Doug had had a previous relationship with the much older Jonas Mekas—often called "the godfather of American avant-garde cinema"—but when a filmmaker friend in Paris introduced him to Hervé, who was twenty years his junior, his "intelligence and rebellious spirit" (as Doug later wrote), his "visceral compassion for the poorest and most oppressed of any color," captivated him. Hervé was the son of Catholic working-class parents who were also communists—thus, as Doug put it, "doubly homophobic"—and Hervé had left home at fifteen, hoping to succeed as a writer. After a year of seeing each other constantly, Doug was certain he'd found what he called his "One Great Love" and the two made a lifelong emotional commitment to each other; they talked about "what it would be like to grow old together, making plans for a cottage in Brittany and, perhaps, for raising a child."

It was not to be. Their dreams were cut short when Hervé was diagnosed as HIV-positive. Hervé told Doug that he wanted to see the States before he died, and Doug returned to New York to lay the groundwork for Hervé's arrival. Just two months before the move was to take place, President Clinton renewed George H. W. Bush's executive order barring admission to any non-citizen who was HIV-positive—an action that turned Doug's dislike of Clinton into hatred and fueled a series of venomous articles about him. Hervé was able, on a tourist visa, to make several brief trips to the U.S., but as his health deteriorated, he could neither work nor travel. France had a decent public health system, but it didn't pay for all Hervé's medical expenses, nor, of course, did it cover rent and living expenses. To provide those, Doug had to stay in New York most of the time to work the political scene. He found the separation "unbearable." He longed to nurse Hervé himself, to provide "the loving presence and moral support that are so crucial to fighting AIDS." Hervé died alone in 1994, and Doug fell into "a black hole of depression," seriously contemplating suicide.

He credits Hitchens with holding him back from the brink. He "knew me well enough," Doug later said, "to have sussed out, without being told, that I was seriously considering ending my own life." Hitch spent hours and hours with Doug trying to make him understand what a disservice it would be to Hervé's memory—how deeply ashamed Hervé would have been had he known he'd caused Doug's death. Hitch's argument worked, and Doug drew back. Ever after he credited Hitch with saving his life. Doug also credited him with never turning down his request to help with this or that queer cause—even after the two came sharply to disagree about Iraq. Hitchens denounced homophobia in print, once writing: "I say that homosexuality is not just a form of sex, it's a form of love—and it commands our respect for that reason."

Doug was never able to claim the same responsiveness for two of his other friends, Gore Vidal and Susan Sontag. Not that he ever wrote a critical word about their refusal to identify with or lift a finger for the gay political movement. That would have gone against the grain of his totalizing view of friendship. Once Doug clasped you to his bosom, he showered you with hyperbolic praise, seemingly incapable of admitting any evidence of human folly or frailty. His treatment of Sontag is a case in point. On her death, Doug wrote about her "humor and wit ... her capacity for lucid self-analysis"—and how amusing she could be "in recounting her own amorous adventures with women." Praising her as "the epitome of the *intellectuelle engagée*," he claimed that "she never shirked the responsibility of living in her time." Yet "her time" included the rise of the LGBT movement, from which she kept a rigidly fastidious distance.

In his later years, Doug was himself a sharp critic of the organized gay movement, in particular the Human Rights Campaign, the largest LGBT political group. Doug denounced it, accurately, as "corporate oriented" and hell-bent on assimilation, on winning mainstream acceptance at the cost of denying the invaluable "differentness" of gay people—and being just as indifferent as the mainstream to the plight of the poor, gay, or otherwise. He indicted LGBT people in general, not simply their organizations, for their ignorance and lack of interest in the widespread, ongoing persecution of LGBT people in countries like Russia, Iraq,

* Doug Ireland, "Remembering Hervé," *The Nation*, June 24, 1996.

Indonesia, and Uganda. The provincialism of gay Americans infuriated him.

For his pains, Doug was himself criticized for judging other cultures according to the degree to which they did or did not conform to Western notions of "gay identity." Widely read, Doug was delighted to discover that most Arab countries had a strong tradition of male-to-male love and lust, though it typically co-existed with opposite-gender attraction. Doug resisted any automatic acceptance of cultural relativism in the name of certain universalist claims. It is *never* right, he'd thunder, to hang two adolescent boys (as happened in Iran in 2005) for "heretical sodomy"; one can *never* justify clitoral surgery for young girls as essential to teaching them their "proper" gender role. For Doug these were criminal acts, and no theocratic or historic justification could excuse them.

Saints or Sinners—the dichotomous approach sometimes looms large in Doug's political writing (as well as in his personal friendships). Yet his critics from the *far* left were much more likely than Doug to avoid shades of gray. This was particularly true of those who denounced him and, by implication, all those who occasionally blurred ideological categories (meaning most social democrats), for swinging between the hope that they could "work within the system" to bring about progressive change and their gut-level awareness that only a far more drastic stance—nonviolent revolution? anarchistic localism?—held out any real chance for substantive social change.

In working with anti-war Democrats like Al Lowenstein and Bella Abzug and thereby encouraging the belief that electoral politics could ever dislodge corporate capitalism's predatory domination, some critics accused Doug of bolstering the iniquitous "permanent government" and sabotaging the socialist vision to which he rhetorically adhered. To this Doug would reply that the conservative mindset in the U.S. that continued to blame individual "failure" on a lack of ability and/or effort rather than on structural obstacles relating to race, class, and gender, dictated a step-by-step pragmatism, a willingness to choose "the lesser of two evils" as the only alternative to despair and retreat. To Doug theoretical purity was a form of snobbism.

The last half-dozen years of Doug's life were full of suffering. Afflicted with PPS (post-polio syndrome—the return of the disease many years after recovering from the initial viral attack), Doug's health inexorably declined. There's no treatment, let alone cure, for PPS, which involves progressive muscle deterioration, accompanied by pain. Doug developed chronic sciatica, and then a veritable plague of ailments—two strokes, diabetes, weakened lungs, and kidney failure—necessitating frequent hospitalizations. He'd long since given up booze-and-talk marathons with political buddies, but toward the end he was rarely able to leave his shabby East Village apartment—nor able to pay the rent for it. Long-time friends kept him this side of homelessness.

Yet to the end, his voice gravelly from muscular debilitation, he continued to work the phones and—somehow—to write occasional reports and reviews for *Gay City News*. When Hurricane Sandy hit in 2013, John Berendt sent a car to collect Doug from his blacked-out apartment and installed him in a bedroom in his elegant townhouse. Doug reported to the political consultant Ethan Geto, his friend of many years, that the food was "*very* good" and that he wouldn't mind staying. Courage and humor, not complaint, were Doug's stock-in-trade. Another old friend, Sean Strub, the founder of *POZ*, dropped by one evening and reported that despite the muscle deterioration that made it difficult for Doug to hold his head up, intellectually he was in scintillating form—so much so that Sean regretted not having brought along a tape recorder to memorialize what was "a master's tutorial" about "the global political environment."

After returning to his apartment from his stay at John's, "Dougie"—as his close friends affectionately called him— rapidly declined. He died on October 26, 2013. A voice of uncommon clarity and charm went silent, his passion and wit emptying into the void.

Psalm

For I shall praise Hasbro, for Big Jim and Big Josh, for the safari jeep, the boots, the beard. For preparing the way.

For I shall praise Jim Palmer, star pitcher for the Baltimore Orioles, whose underwear ads were holy writ of adolescence. Praise for David Hodo, whose torn jeans and hard hat were an annunciation. Praise, oh praise, for Tom Selleck, Magnum PI.

Blessed be the one who touched my leg when I sat on the second pew at church with all the other boys, for the shame of it, the snickers, for what I learned.

Blessed be the furry attorney from Waco, whose letters mapped the terrain of the closet. Blessed be his locked trunk of porn, book of revelations.

Blessed be the priest who listened in the dark confessional of a hotel bed as we both looked back, brush of skin, taste of salt.

Blessed be the architect in Hyde Park, who ate a sweet green apple as he kissed me, fruit of knowledge.

ED MADDEN

Lesbians, Please Leave the Stage!

LAURENCE SENELICK

THE AUDACIOUS FRENCH THEATER DIRECTOR ANDRÉ Antoine felt compelled to write to an author whose play he had accepted for production that he would have to cancel the performance. "Your play, which might possibly be performed among intimates, *is not playable to a public audience,*" he explained on May 26, 1891. At the read-through, the actors, case-hardened as they were to "naturalistic" subjects, had been aghast at the boldness and violence of the central concept. Antoine admitted that he had let himself be won over by the play's literary qualities, but "I do not think that, after this trial, an auditorium of 1,200 persons could accept coolly such an inordinately abnormal and impassioned situation." Were the author to insist on his rights, "we simply run the danger of having the Théâtre Libre closed by a huge scandal which would be quickly exploited by someone you know and which you do not seek ultimately any more than we do."

What could have provoked such a nervous reaction? Antoine, an employee of the gasworks, had founded his Théâtre Libre in Paris in 1887 precisely to challenge conventional dramatic taste. It was located in an obscure neighborhood on the unfashionable Left Bank and employed amateur actors. The evenings were usually made up of three or four one-act plays accompanied by a lecture to provoke discussion. In the past, one-acts had been mere comic curtain-raisers or afterpieces. Under Antoine, they were naturalistic "slices of life," drawn from the seamy side of society. The subject matter was often as raw as the sides of beef Antoine had hung on stage in a play about butchers. There were frequent protests from the press and the public.

Lawn-tennis encapsulates *fin-de-siècle* preconceptions of the lesbian—not so much the mannish spinster as the oversexed woman or Bacchante.

As a rule, Antoine had no qualms about shocking his audience. He declared that he preferred "license" to "liberty." The year before his apologetic letter, he had staged Linert's *Conte de Noël* (*Christmas Story*), in which an illegitimate newborn is thrown to the pigs, while an offstage choir intones "Venite adoremus" (Come let us adore him). However, in the case of this newly submitted "strange and powerful" play, he had no choice but to turn it down for performance. "When I speak of convention which we all detest," he wrote, "I refer to that wholly British hypocrisy peculiar to people in aggregate who, as individuals, indulge in lots of smuttiness without the least shame." In other words, what might be acceptable in private was bound to be rejected in public.

So far as we know, the author, Gabriel Mourey, did not complain. Instead, he published the play as a pamphlet and prefaced it with Antoine's letter. Mourey (1865-1943) was a prominent Parisian art critic who wrote libretti for Debussy. A collection of his poems had just been published. So he was no rank beginner whose efforts could be dismissed as inept. What made his play unperformable was that its subject was sex between women.

The title of the one-act is in English: *Lawn-tennis*. At this time French high society was infected with Anglophilia. Such terms as "le week-end" and "le fif o'clock" (high tea) had entered the language. Lawn tennis was a genteel Victorian innovation, and 1891 was the year in which the highly exclusive French Championships in Lawn Tennis were founded. Mourey, who had written a book about London, was well-informed about these cross-cultural exchanges.

The action takes place on an elegant country estate on a fine summer's day. Japanese fans, a rocking-chair, and tea tables indicate wealth, fashion, and social status. The manor belongs to the newly wed Georges Marville. His bride, Elaine, seems nervous at the impending arrival of her girlhood friend Camille (a unisex name in French). They were raised as sisters, and Georges confesses, jokingly, that during his courtship he had been jealous of their intimacy.

Camille, who hasn't seen Elaine since the marriage, praises her ardent nature and loyalty. George suspects that Elaine had had a lover before they met and wants to know who it was. He doesn't understand her present coldness. "She stayed in bed two days, gripped by fever ... and words, indistinct words issued from her mouth, a name ... whose? A strange name. And she was calling you too ... in her delirium. ... But that name! that name! Oh! I could have killed him." What he doesn't know is that his own name, Georges, was also the name Camille had adopted as her "butch" persona.

No sooner has Georges made his exit into the house than Camille erupts into a Sapphic rhapsody (note that the many ellipses are in the original text):

> My head is spinning ... my blood is boiling. It has been so long! ... And this is your hair ... your hair! ... These are your eyes ... your eyes! ... These are your lips ... these are your lips ... Elaine ... you see, I'm weeping like a little girl ... (*She sobs*) With happiness ... I thought I had lost you forever ... I wanted to fling in his face. Yes, she was mine, before she was yours. It is the taste of my kisses you find on her mouth ... on her eyes ... her shell-like ears ... her hair ... all over her flesh ... I was there first!

Camille then recalls their first night of passion, when they were dressed as twins and she draped herself in Elaine's hair. Elaine, who has been trying to be a good normal wife, is terrified yet mesmerized by these remembrances.

Laurence Senelick is Fletcher Professor of Drama at Tufts University and a Fellow of the American Academy of Arts and Sciences.

ELAINE, *as if from afar*. Georges! (*Camille puts her hand over her lips*.)
CAMILLE. Elaine! (*She opens the top of Elaine's blouse, reveals her bosom, glues her lips to it*). Ah ... ah ... Elaine ... Elaine ... You hear me! – Adored soul ... adored flesh ... I was dead ... and now I am alive again ... How lovely the sunlight is!... Nature never changes!... Neither do we!... My God!... Elaine!

In the midst of this transport, Elaine bursts out, "No, no, no ... you horrify me! ... Go away! ... Do not touch me again ... I am pregnant!"

CAMILLE (*utters a cry of rage*). Oh! ... then you do love him, that man! (*She squeezes her neck with her hands, her arms; starting as caresses*). Your neck! ... my place in your neck! ... God ... blood ... your blood! Elaine! ... (*And since she has hurt her with her nails, she presses her mouth to the wound*) Elaine ...
ELAINE (*choking*). Georges! ...
CAMILLE. Pregnant!... A-a-ah! ... (*She strangles her.*)
ELAINE, *in a faint voice*. Georges ! ...
CAMILLE. That name!... (*Very gently, her mouth against the mouth of the writhing Elaine*). Yes ... I am here ... here I am ... Georges ... your Georges ... who loves you ...
ELAINE, *expiring*. Farewell! ... I love you ...
CAMILLE. Dead! ... God! ...

At which point, a house guest bounds in saying, in essence, "Anyone for tennis?"

As Antoine pointed out, this overheated crime of passion, with its Grand-Guignol climax, was simply too much for any public stage at the *fin de siècle*. Still, it contains a number of popular motifs in current art. Elaine's Arthurian name suggests her otherworldly nature. Camille's murderous action seems a kind of Wagnerian *Liebestod*. The *femme fatale* was a ubiquitous literary type. The idea that becoming pregnant was a token of true love was part of common folklore.

The play also encapsulates a number of period preconceptions of the lesbian. Not so much the mannish spinster who was portrayed in fiction and popular imagery as a hard-featured virago dressed in a simulation of masculine attire, Camille and Elaine are instead variants of the oversexed woman or Bacchante. In his book on turn-of-the-century corruption, also published in 1891, Léo Taxil, describing lesbianism in brothels, dwelt on the intense jealousies and emotional outbursts of women in relationships. Also prevalent was the Svengali theme—popularized by George Du Maurier's novel *Trilby* and its dramatizations—that powerful natures could dominate weaker minds. Even the American *National Police Gazette* headed one of its sensational reports (Dec. 7, 1895): "Hypnotized by a woman. Unnatural affair. Female Svengali ... Tried to drug her friend."

The Swedish playwright August Strindberg was obsessed with the theme of a stronger psyche overcoming a feebler one, inhabiting and inseminating it with its ideas. It is no coincidence that the first lesbian in modern drama appears in his play *Comrades* (1888). Although later Strindberg was to characterize lesbians as vampires, at this point he simply saw them as denatured creatures who lacked a woman's irrational instincts for survival. In his play, Abel is a friend of a young married couple, Swedish artists transplanted to a Parisian garret. Strindberg based Abel on Louise Abbema, a painter and lesbian-about-town whom "Sarah Bernhardt allowed to adore her."

AXEL [the husband]. Tell me, Abel, you who have the common sense of a man and can be reasoned with, tell me how it feels to be a woman. Is it so awful?
ABEL (*facetiously*). Yes, of course. It feels like I'm a nigger. [...]
AXEL. Abel, have you really never had any desire to love a man?
ABEL. How silly you are!
AXEL. Have you never found any one?
ABEL. No, men are very scarce.
AXEL. Hmm, don't you consider me a man?
ABEL. You! No!
AXEL. That's what I fancied myself to be.
ABEL. Are you a man? You, who work for a woman and go around dressed like a woman?
AXEL. What? I, dressed like a woman?
ABEL. The way you wear your hair long and go around with your shirt open at the neck, while she wears stiff collars and short hair; be careful, soon she'll take your trousers away from you.

At this point Strindberg imagined lesbians to be asexual and liberated from a normal woman's innate nymphomania. Later on, aggravated by his wife's female friendships, he changed his mind and bought into the same perfervid nightmares that suffuse Mourey's play.

When *Lawn-tennis* appeared in print, few publications chose to notice it. The avant-garde *Le Livre moderne* praised its "incontestable power," but the more staid *Mercure de France* couched its few sentences in the learned language of Latin. The most surprising allusion appeared in a work by the American-born critic Georges Polti (1868-1946). Polti's *36 Dramatic Situations* (1895) was for decades a basic textbook for playwrights. He uses *Lawn-tennis* as the prime example for why lesbianism is a bad theme for drama. His reason is that "this vice has not the horrible grandeur of its congener [i.e., male homosexuality]." "Weak and colorless, the last evil habit of worn-out or unattractive women, it does not offer to the tragic poet that madness, brutal and preposterous, but springing from wild youth and strength, which we find in the criminal passion of the heroic ages." In other words, male homosexuality has the imprimatur of the classical Apollo/Dionysus tension that might enable it, under the right circumstances, to have dramatic appeal. As a "vice" exclusive to women, lesbianism is too specialized for a general public.

Even so, *La Prisonnière*, Édouard Bourdet's 1926 drama of Sapphic obsession, adopts much the same plot as *Lawn-tennis*, and proved to be a commercial success, praised by no less an expert in lesbian performance than Colette. Once again, a young wife is under the influence of a dominating female lover, endangering her marriage. Bourdet's ingenuity lay in keeping the dangerous lesbian off-stage and concentrating on the interchanges between husband and wife. As a subject for drama, lesbians had no independent existence: their function was to threaten the stability of the bourgeois household. The Parisian stage may have advanced to the point where such a theme could be accepted in a boulevard *drame*. Abroad, Antoine's trepidation was still warranted. The American adaptation of Bourdet, *The Captive* (1927), was raided by the New York police and forced

What will you remember?











The best gay men's resort in the world

Clothing-optional private compound. 24-hour poolside restaurant and bar. Heated pool, two Jacuzzis, gym, sauna, steamroom and erotic video lounge. Deluxe rooms. Free WiFi. Free parking.

tripadvisor CERTIFICATE OF EXCELLENCE

IsLAnd HouSe

ISLANDHOUSEKEYWEST.COM • 1 (305) 294-6284
1129 FLEMING STREET • KEY WEST
FRONTDESK@ISLANDHOUSEKEYWEST.COM

to close.

Lawn-tennis may have left one other trace. Nijinsky's ballet *Jeux* (1913) has a tennis-playing threesome at its core. Those dance historians aware of Mourey's play have said point-blank that there is no connection between it and Nijinsky's choreography. I'm not so sure. The music for the ballet was commissioned by Claude Debussy. He and Mourey were friends and collaborators, the former providing libretti and lyrical texts for the latter. Nijinsky, on the look-out for subjects for an up-to-date ballet, was attracted to tennis because of its upwards swinging movements. He also hoped to create gender confusion by dancing in toe shoes; this idea was negated, although in performance he did wear a red tie, international badge of cruising males.

Debussy may, as a joke, have mentioned Mourey's *Lawn-tennis* to the impresario Sergei Diaghilev. We know that Diaghilev, with his homophilic predilections and fondness for scandal, would have preferred the trio to be all male. Ultimately, it was Nijinsky, who often chafed at Diaghilev's playing "the stronger," who made the *ménage à trois* two women and a youth. The ballet ends with the boy and one of the girls exiting into the shrubbery. When the composer was presented with the scenario, he boggled at the suggestiveness. He needed to have his fee doubled before he undertook to compose the score. If the depiction in a ballet of modern-day heterosexual "troilism" (three-way sex) in a ballet could shock so cultured a person as Debussy, two women pairing off would have been unthinkable. Audiences still needed to be shielded from lesbian love.

INTERNATIONAL SPECTRUM

Coming Out Twice: Gay and Asian in the UK

KEN POWELL

NOT LONG AGO, I wrote in these pages about issues facing the Bangladesh GLBT community ("Activism Struggling to be Born," Nov.-Dec. 2013), having worked there for many years. When I returned to the UK last year, I wondered how much British Asians identified with these problems and what others they have to deal with.

British Asians live between two worlds. Most are second- or third-generation, born in the UK rather than abroad. But much of their cultural heritage is fixed firmly in India, Pakistan, or Bangladesh and is thus quite foreign to Britain. Most still have family in Asia, and some British Asian men will go back to marry a woman chosen by their family and bring her back to the UK. But in these countries of South Asia, homosexuality is taboo, if not actually illegal. According to *The Sunday Times* last year, a recent poll in Pakistan found that only two percent of the population believed homosexuality should be accepted by society. A Gallup poll in Britain in 2009 found that none of the 500 British Muslims interviewed believed that homosexuality was "morally acceptable." In India, section 377—a law from the days of British rule making homosexuality illegal—was thrown out by a high court ruling in 2009 but then reinstated by the Supreme Court in 2013, leaving a trail of legal confusion. Thus Asian Brits who are gay live in a country that's broadly tolerant but tend to come from families and communities that frown on their sexual orientation.

Not surprisingly, this leads to distress and even psychological damage for many British Asian GLBT people. Research by Dr. Rusi Jaspal of the Department of Psychology at Royal Holloway, University of London, looked into the lives of gay British Asian men of Pakistani origin and found that this divided identity is a huge issue that can produce serious psychological problems, especially for those trying to be gay and Muslim. Most of his participants in interviews felt guilty and believed they were doing something wrong. While some rejected their Islamic faith to reconcile this contradiction, others struggled to meld the two. Fear of physical violence and even "honor killings" have led some to keep their sexual orientation a secret.

But things are not all doom and gloom. Little by little, gay British Asians are feeling more confident and safer about coming out. Slowly, this community is becoming more visible. I talked with three men who are active in the UK with promoting acceptance of the gay people in Asian society and awareness of the issues of living between multiple cultures. Bobby Tiwana (BT, below), with a Punjabi Sikh background, is a cultural activist who creates live performances and is currently producing a play about same-sex love in Asian communities. His work evolved out of a project involving interviewing British Asian gays and lesbians to record their story. This led to his blog, Safar (which means "journey" in Hindi), and to continuing work to demystify taboos and make these stories culturally visible. Bobby's partner, Dr. Abhi Shetty (AS), a Hindu born in Bangalore who moved to the UK ten years ago, is a consulting psychiatrist. Khakan Qureshi (KQ), a Muslim, is the founder of Finding a Voice, a Birmingham group that meets in the heart of the city and welcomes people of any faith, background, or disability.

Ken Powell: Bobby, why did you create the Safar project and were you surprised by what you heard?
BT: I was inspired by a visit to Bangalore in 2011 when I met a group of educated, middle-class gay men who had come out openly and yet enjoyed good relationships with their families. I wanted to see such openness in the UK. I interviewed a number of GLBT people in 2012 because I felt the stories needed to be heard, and Safar is part of this. Sowing the seeds that "we exist" in the media is so important. I found such a strong sense of survival from the interviewees, of resilience, and of making lives work. People need to see this. It is important to create positive role models and for gay British Asians to realize that even holding hands with someone is activism.

There were many surprises. The single largest group who contacted me were gay Muslim women. I interviewed a couple of women living together in Coventry—one is a Sikh and the other a Muslim. Traditionally, these are two completely separate communities yet they are in a relationship together and living peacefully in the same street as the Sikh's family. Similarly, I met a Bangladeshi Muslim woman wearing a hijab who talked of liking blond women! We see a veiled woman and imagine what she must be thinking, but this woman turned that notion on its head.

KP: We tend to think of Islam being against homosexuality. Is it possible for gay British Muslims to retain their faith? What about non-Muslims?
KQ: Of course, there are those in life who give up the faith completely and seem to accept or acknowledge that being Muslim and gay is not permissible in the Qu'ran. But there are GLBT Muslim people who come together in a charitable organization called Imaan, based in London, for social activities, retreats, conferences, and workshops in an attempt to seek answers about how their sexual orientation fits in with Islam. In my own organization we have Sikhs, Muslims, atheists, and agnostics, and we discuss the problems of faith. The key issues faced by gay Asians—and gay Muslims in particular—concern the question of how you can be both Muslim and gay, feelings of guilt that one's sexual desires are "*haram*" (forbidden), and dual discrimination of Islamophobia and homophobia.
BT: Activities like going to the temple in the

past were cultural identifiers and important elements of my socialization, but I'm not a religious Sikh and don't feel that religion is a major issue. I have to admit though that, despite being an active voice for British Asian GLBT communities and living in a liberal country, I'm not entirely open about my sexual orientation with my family.

AS: Religion is not the issue so much as the sociocultural context is. The problem with coming out is talking about sex. Openly discussing gay relationships is a problem because *any* talk of sex is taboo.

KP: If talk of sex is taboo, are British Asians able to tell their families about being gay? Have you told your families and friends?

BT: My dad hasn't been told explicitly, but my mum has, and she struggles with it.

AS: I don't feel able to talk about Bobby in group family gatherings back in India despite feeling able to mention him with individual members. But when I've come out, I've experienced acceptance and tolerance on the whole. Some people are a little ignorant but I find that if I educate them, they quickly become more positive. Your confidence matters; a lot of it has to do with the fear that resides inside us.

BT: Yes, people are out to different degrees depending on how accepted they feel. It's easier to come out once you've moved away from your home town.

KQ: I am working with Pakistani Muslim men who are still being persecuted, fleeing from homes, or are being abused or intimidated by parents, family members, and even the extended family. There are many who still wish to remain silent or continue to have sex with men but do not wish to identify as gay or bisexual. Those I have spoken to say that they've experienced severe anxiety and depression, attempted suicide, considered marrying a woman to "save face" and family honor, or refused to come out to family even though they may have a partner who's introduced as a "close friend."

KP: Do British Asian LGBTs feel pressured by their families to marry? I've heard about marriages of convenience (MoCs) in which a gay man and lesbian woman will marry to appease their families while allowing their true gay relationships to continue. Is this true?

BT: MoC marriages are advertised blatantly on the website for the popular Saathi Night in Birmingham. But many in the community are angered by MoCs because they perpetuate the problems of acceptance and visibility.

KQ: In London the community is fairly open, but in other parts of the UK the gay Muslim community is still closeted. Saathi was set up for South Asian GLBT people. But in the last few years, it has become more appealing to the heterosexual community. In some sense, this is pressing or pushing the intended original audience to retreat back "into the closet." This is also leading to fear of coming out, reprisals, an increase in homophobic attacks, and a rise in MoCs.

KP: What is the situation for the GLBT community in India following the reinstating of Section 377?

AS: During those three years when section 377 was repealed, we saw some amazing discussion in India in a public media which was very sympathetic. The Bangalore Queer Film Festival in just a few years has gone from nothing to over seventy films. Well-known directors, producers, and writers came out as gay. But now the reversal of section 377 puts their future in jeopardy. And what does it mean for those of us who are openly gay here but want to visit family in India? It is a real worry.

KP: Is now the moment for British Asian gays to be accepted in British Asian society?

BT: Yes! But lack of visibility is still a real issue. There's a lot more work to do yet, but there are beacons of hope. I believe it will reach critical mass sooner rather than later.

Ken Powell is author of Sonali' *(2014) and of the forthcoming* Try Not to Laugh: How to Revise, Memorise and Survive Exams.

Before There Was Mapplethorpe

ALLEN ELLENZWEIG

Wagstaff: Before and After Mapplethorpe: A Biography
by Philip Gefter
W.W. Norton, 459 pages

FULL DISCLOSURE: the author of *Wagstaff: Before and After Mapplethorpe: A Biography* has been a supportive colleague of mine over many years. Actually, if anything could disqualify me from writing this review, it would be the two memorably unpleasant phone conversations I had with its main subject, curator and collector Samuel Wagstaff. But this will not affect my review of his biography; the story told is either worthwhile or not, and even the worst rascal's life may make for interesting reading.

Philip Gefter, photo editor, journalist, and film producer, has produced a book that makes the case for Wagstaff's importance in elevating photography from its inferior critical and market position in the art world. But the book is also a thoughtful examination of the workings of this world in the later decades of the 20th century. At the same time, because Wagstaff was both a New York patrician and gay, Gefter offers an intriguing account of his double life and that of others in his situation both before and after Stonewall. There was social decorum to observe, and there was an illicit appetite to slake. The late journalist and social commentator Dominick Dunne, a friend of Wagstaff in the 1950s, called him "the deb's delight." In Gefter's words, Wagstaff relied "on his impeccable etiquette to shield his activities in the closet. He kept the expectations of young women from proper families at bay ... leaving them with an all-too-polite peck on the cheek in front of the doorman." Then off into the night the princely Wagstaff would go, frequenting the 1950s Bird Circuit along Third Avenue in the East Fifties "where gay bars with names like the Blue Parrott and the Gold Pheasant were hiding in plain sight."

Gefter's larger claim is that Wagstaff was nearly always prescient in his taste, and that his later advocacy on behalf of photography followed from his earlier efforts of the 1960s to advance minimalism and the new New York avant-garde—the Warhol crowd, the Pop artists, and the artist-performers devising ephemeral "happenings" around the city. Even before that, when Wagstaff served as curator at the Wadsworth Atheneum in Hartford and the Detroit Institute of the Arts, he was seen as a kind of knight-errant taking up exotic new forms. At the Wadsworth, he introduced the cool, spare, industrial-style æsthetic of minimalism in a ground-breaking 1964 show *Black, White and Gray*, which emerged from his acquaintance with New York artists such as Dan Flavin, Robert Indiana, Jasper Johns, Jim Dine, Ellsworth Kelly, Agnes Martin, Tony Smith, Ad Reinhart, and Robert Rauschenberg.

At least two things moderated criticism of Wagstaff: his social pedigree and his stunning good looks. A graduate of the prep school Hotchkiss and later of Yale, after some years in advertising he took up the study of art history at the esteemed Institute of Fine Arts, New York University's elite graduate school, whose faculty was a Who's Who of German-Jewish refugee eminences. Wagstaff's mentor was Richard Offner, a specialist of trecento and quattrocento Italian art who guided his pupil through the Tuscan hills with lessons on the art of truly examining an æsthetic object. "Looking"—deeply, longingly, persistently—was for Wagstaff both a method and a credo, and Gefter makes a reasonable case for the "erotic" element that such a method represented for a gay man who had to negotiate hidden codes.

A graduate degree from the IFA was no small thing in the 1960s museum world, and Wagstaff parlayed his credentials, his charm with women, and his assured manner to initial success. He did have one fiasco with an earthworks installation by Michael Heizer, *Dragged Mass Displacement*, where a block of granite was hauled across a section of the Detroit Institute's lawn, leaving not an artistic impression but a "museum lawn appearing like a very messy construction site." The entire affair was met with so much public derision that Wagstaff resigned his post in September 1971.

All this may seem beside the point to those who are only interested in Wagstaff as he relates to Robert Mapplethorpe, the photographer who put "gay" into photographs in a way that was certain to shock the bourgeoisie. By the time the two men met, Mapplethorpe and his friend Patti Smith, who would soon be a famous poet and rocker, fashioned themselves up-and-coming denizens of the downtown scene—Max's Kansas City, the Chelsea Hotel—while Wagstaff, more than twenty years Mapplethorpe's senior, was already well established. Wagstaff had taken up many artists as personal causes, and had often advocated with a full heart that would later be bruised by an artist's failure to reciprocate. With Mapplethorpe, he found both an eager acolyte and a gay man who perfectly embodied his physical type—lean and feline, angular and sexy. Mapplethorpe was already creating collages out of found pornographic images slyly referencing Catholic iconography, and while photography was not yet Wagstaff's thing, he found something in Mapplethorpe's approach that weakened his resistance to it. In fact, photographing *each other* became a form of erotic interaction for them.

Many people have wondered how much calculation went into their relationship. Wagstaff became Mapplethorpe's advocate and patron, buying him the loft that allowed the younger man to conduct his photographic practice as a professional, while Mapplethorpe helped Wagstaff shed the last vestiges of his fancy upbringing with its superficial decorum and half-truths. Writes Gefter: "Sam could finally integrate his

Allen Ellenzweig is a contributor to the new book Storyteller: The Photographs of Duane Michals, *which is reviewed in this issue.*

private desires with his public identity, and he began to reside more completely in his body, exhibiting ... at least a tentative sexual openness that was astonishing for a man of his social background."

The couple became a recognized item, spending time with each other hand-in-glove. One friend maintained that Wagstaff was looking for a young man to "spoil," and Mapplethorpe, deeply ambitious and aware of the politics of the art world, was looking for someone who could take him to the right places. Gefter never uses the term, so I will. Mapplethorpe was a climber, and while he had real talent, it's an open question whether he would have gone so far so fast without Wagstaff. Edmund White sees the exchange between them in a manner worthy of Colette during the *fin de siècle*: "I think Robert was a very clever, genteel, long-range opportunist ... in the way that millions of women have been since the beginning of time—you marry a rich husband. ... There's nothing sinister about it." As for Mapplethorpe's taking Wagstaff's money to buy his loft, White again takes the Continental view: "I think it's perfectly normal for a poor Catholic boy from Long Island, who's eaten up by ambition, to hook his wagon to that particular star."

By 1973, Wagstaff was exploring photography with the zeal of a convert to a cause. He had recently discovered Edward Steichen's 1904 photograph *The Flatiron*. The painterly qualities of the colored tints in two different versions of the image, combined with the building's assertive modernism, struck a chord with Wagstaff, who considered "subject" and "image" here to be in perfect balance. He appreciated the image as representing a pure moment of transition between the "mechanical and handmade" and the "representational and abstract." Soon he began to explore realms of 19th-century photography from England, France, and the U.S. (Gustave Le Grey, Henri Le Secq, Hill and Adamson, Felice Beato, John Thompson, Carlton Watkins, et al.)—photographs that had been abandoned to musty archives and family attics. Indeed, he became the advance guard in a network of dealers and collectors who came to form a loose cartel that frankly manipulated the London photography auctions to their own benefit.

Gefter is very good on presenting the various dramatis personæ of that heady period when large photography collections were being amassed: men like the young go-getter and private dealer Daniel Wolf; or the elegant Pierre Apraxine, curator of the Gilman Paper Company Collection; or Harry Lunn of Washington, D.C.'s Graphics International, a bald man of gnomic mien who commanded a room and bore the whiff of his past work for the CIA.

Gefter doesn't stint on the aristocratic insouciance with which Wagstaff conducted his home life, portraying his subject as representative of a certain "dash" of the socially privileged: the sparely furnished penthouse apartment at One Fifth Avenue that looks south over Washington Square Park and north to the silk stocking precincts of his parents' tonier Upper East Side. Wagstaff invested well in real estate and lived a kind of "fuck you" bohemianism, adopting the look of a well-tended hippie for a number of years in the 1970s. Nutty in his pursuit of new photographs to pore over and dissect, at a certain point he even wore out the young Mapplethorpe, who was eager to ingest the full history of the medium in which he would later produce his own highly refined iterations of the perfect tulip, the perfect black torso or penis, the perfect portrait of the downtown arriviste.

As things turned out, Mapplethorpe's use of Wagstaff for social climbing wasn't entirely one-sided. When Mapplethorpe finally grabbed the brass ring with simultaneous inaugural exhibitions of his alternately elegant and sexually provocative work, solidifying his reputation as a naughty altar boy, Wagstaff hosted a huge "coming out party" at One Fifth Avenue's Art Deco restaurant and bar, the downtown place to see and be seen. The guest list included fashion legend Diana Vreeland, designers Halston and Elsa Peretti, the outsize photography collector-

dealer Harry Lunn, gallerists Charles Cowles and Klaus Kertess, artists Judy Linn and Lynne David, and British heiresses Catherine Guinness and Caterine Milinaire. Diane von Furstenberg brought the young Arnold Schwarzenegger along.

One chronicler of the age had a particular take on the spectacle: "Fran Lebowitz, then a writer for Andy Warhol's *Interview*, respected the pursuit of art as something pure and true. She had known Mapplethorpe as a struggling artist in the back room of Max's Kansas City and considered the occasion not as the beginning of his legitimacy, but as the end: "'I thought the party was a joke,' she said, likening Robert in that context to a once rebellious girl 'showing you her big diamond ring and telling you she's marrying a rich doctor and moving to Greenwich, Connecticut.'" Today, Wagstaff and Mapplethorpe might have cashed in as a cable reality show.

After the sale of his collection to the Getty, and before his slow withering from AIDS, Wagstaff moved on to a new area of collecting and market-building: "æsthetic silver" from England, the Continent, and the U.S., including serving pieces like coffee pots, butter dishes, napkin rings, a Tiffany tray. Gefter argues that Wagstaff was moved to recognize early and deeply these sparkling artisanal works otherwise languishing in the obscurity of the arcane, theorizing that his homosexuality is what drove his desire to retrieve the "unconventional and unexplored ... to invent a parallel universe of symbols and meanings—such as camp, for example—in a society that had for so long rejected his kind." But we may also wonder if there's something peculiarly "gay" in this need to acquire and collect anything at all. I cannot escape the ghoulish sense that all this acquisitiveness was Wagstaff's race against time, as if he might escape the final reckoning since, after all, there was always yet one more object out there to be admired, studied, and catalogued.

Loving in Triangles

MARTHA E. STONE

Vanessa and Her Sister
by Priya Parmar
Ballantine Books. 350 pages, $26.

THE DESCENDANTS of the original members of the Bloomsbury Group—a name taken from the neighborhood in which they lived, not coined until the 1960s—are very much among us. Earlier this year, *Van Gogh: A Power Seething*, by Julian Bell, a painter and writer who's the grandson of Vanessa Bell (and great-nephew of Virginia Woolf), received front-page coverage in *The New York Times Book Review*. Vanessa and her younger sister Virginia are the eponymous title characters of a wonderfully appealing and compulsively readable novel by Priya Parmar. It's told with style and authority by a writer with just one previous book to her credit, a historical novel about actress Nell Gwynn.

Parmar's narrative relies for the most part on an imagined diary kept by Vanessa Bell from 1905 to 1912. Before her marriage to Clive Bell, Vanessa had been, in real life, a student of John Singer Sargent at the Royal Academy School and an admirer of Whistler's works. In an almost throwaway comment on the pitfalls of fictionalizing such a well-documented group of people, Parmar writes in an introductory note: "For me the difficulty came in finding enough room for invention in the negative spaces they left behind." To say that she channeled Vanessa Bell would be facile, but her depth of scholarship and obvious deep regard for the members of the Bloomsbury Group are apparent.

In 1905, Virginia and Vanessa's beloved brother Thoby Stephen, along with friends he had met at Trinity College, Cambridge, moved back to London. Among them were Lytton Strachey, Clive Bell, and Leonard Woolf. They held weekly salons to discuss art, literature, and politics. At first, the sisters were the only women invited. They would frequently meet outside their salon, in various permutations, sometimes traveling together, sometimes forming passionate, platonic—or even romantic— friendships, regardless of gender or assumed sexual orientation. Strachey is quoted (in the fictional diary) as saying: "We all love in triangles." The diary frequently veers off into extensive dialog that few diarists would ever be able to replicate exactly. There's much tragedy, too, in Thoby's 1906 death (from typhoid, contracted in Greece). "Did you wake up in time to see your last morning?" Vanessa's diary entry wondered on the day he died.

Vanessa Bell, 1910

Parmar creates tremendous tension around the many emotional illnesses that Virginia Woolf endured: "A few years ago, Virginia talked for three days without stopping for food or sleep or a bath. ... [Her] words unraveled into elemental sounds: quick, gruff, guttural vowels that snapped and broke over anyone who tried to reach her. Her features foxed with anger growing sly and sharp. ... [She] spent a month in the nursing home recovering." Vanessa's husband, Clive Bell, and Virginia may or may not have had an affair. (Strachey was quite sure there was nothing going on. "It is your attention she's after, not his," he told Vanessa.) Soon, Vanessa found herself involved with the British artist and critic Roger Fry, whose wife was permanently institutionalized for mental illness. Fry, who "galvanized Bloomsbury," in the words of Richard Shone, author of *Art of*

Bloomsbury (the catalog for a 1999-2000 Tate exhibit), was an acclaimed art critic, writer, and artist.

At one of the Bell's innumerable house parties, E. M. ("Morgan" to his friends) Forster, just a couple of novels into his writing career, makes an appearance. "Morgan goes about his writing with such an unfussy, self-effacing grace that he is one of the few people for whom Lytton feels no real jealousy, only admiration." Virginia Woolf, a regular contributor to *The Times Literary Supplement*, "is bitingly jealous of Morgan and usually avoids discussing his novels." It bears mentioning that the artists and critics of Bloomsbury started to make their mark before Woolf's first novel, *The Voyage Out*, was published in 1915. Between 1911 and '12, Vanessa had made four portraits of Virginia, who felt overshadowed by the artists' success and was annoyed that art talk took precedence over literary talk.

Interspersed among the diary entries are imagined postcards that Lytton Strachey sent to his friend Leonard Woolf, who in real life, and in Parmar's creation, was employed by the Ceylon Civil Service. Many of the postcards urge Woolf to come back to England and to marry Virginia Stephen.

An occasional 21st-century anachronism does creep in, and Vanessa has the rather annoying habit of ending some of her diary entries with a cliff-hanging paragraph beginning with the word "And." One such entry is about "Maynard Keynes, Lytton's young economist friend from Cambridge—with whom I understand him to be occasionally involved? But then, I may be wrong. I often am." Parmar provides a helpful "What became of them" section that can lead readers to the original works by the authors, to their biographies and memoirs, and to the art museums that hold their works.

B R I E F S

Framed Butterflies
by Raad Rahman
Bard College Press. 247 pages, $7.99

This novel is about two young Bangladeshi women, Nisaa and Maryam, who come from families with close ties, have grown up with each other, and begin an illicit relationship. The affair is discovered by their parents, who are shocked and disgusted. Nisaa, the narrator of the story, is sent away to India to continue her education far from her family's gaze. Maryam is forced to marry a man she cannot love and later bears his children. The story follows the narrator's life as she drifts from place to place, not knowing what she wants or who she wants it with. She rejects her American boyfriend and then lets him back into her life only to dump him again after seeing Maryam once more. This confusion is mirrored in the book's structure, which takes us backwards in time to the moment the pair discovered their mutual passion and from there meanders through to its conclusion, mixing thematic strands and taking detours that threaten to derail both Nisaa's life and the plot of the novel. Maryam is more consistent but also more delusional. Outwardly, she's the conventional good Muslim wife and mother, but secretly she's having an affair with the maid and still desires Nisaa. In short, she's trapped by her inability to change and by the rigidity of society. It is Nisaa who's the ticking time bomb to the Bangladeshi status quo: she's a chameleon and a survivor with ties to the West—a foreigner, a lesbian, an independent woman—whose main limitation is her state of confusion as she negotiates her various roles in life.

KEN POWELL

Farewell Motel
Album by Matthew Connor

Once the lead singer of an electro-pop band called Provocateur and now a crooner with an Elvis-like baritone, Matthew Connor is a performer of considerable range and panache. A native of Birmingham, Alabama, Connor spent his youth in the South but, as a self-described "queer kid," always felt like an outsider. So he bade Dixie adieu, moved to Boston, and released his debut album *Farewell Motel*. The video for "How is July Already Over" (a nominee for Music Video of the Year at the Boston Music Awards and available on YouTube) features Connor in a white tuxedo, involved in a *pas de deux* with actor Hunter Canning. In an interview, Connor told me that he enjoys the autonomy of being a solo artist: "I'm very much a control freak, so being able to write, produce, record, perform, and oversee every element of how I present myself from start to finish is a huge thing for me." His powers of self-fashioning could be the most compelling thing about Connor, who felt that *Farewell Motel* needed to be sung in an old-fashioned style. "Smoke Signals" is the paradigmatic track, since Connor's vocals don't so much resound but waft, like a smoke ring, evoking the great k.d. lang and her cigarette-inspired *Drag* of 1997. "After the Show" picks up the pace with a more contemporary tempo, and it's one that should carry Connor into new musical vistas. He assured me that there is nothing "retro" about his forthcoming music. "Farewell Motel" may feel old-timey, but taut and elegant, it's channeling somebody or some thing.

COLIN CARMAN

It's Not About the Music

Colin Carman

Heroes:
David Bowie in Berlin
by Tobias Rüther
Reaktion Books. 184 pages, $25.

"Do you like girls or boys?" asked David Bowie in the song "Hallo Spaceboy" (1996), adding slyly, "It's confusing these days." Since the 70s, Bowie has worked hard to generate similar confusion about his own sexuality through personæ like glam-rocker Ziggy Stardust (with his "God-given ass"), the epicene Thin White Duke, and his collaboration, in the 80s, with Queen. In the 90s, Bowie updated his bisexual image once more, declaring on *Buddha of Suburbia* that the "whole world is queer." As recently as 2013, Bowie had another comeback, this time with *The Next Day*, a stellar album in which he sings lovingly of running with the boys—"dirty boys," that is. Could he be alluding to the urban legend that his first wife caught Mick Jagger and himself in flagrante delicto?

In Berlin for three years (1976–79), Bowie relocated to 155 Hauptstrasse (not far from Dietrich's birthplace and Isherwood's digs in the early 1930s) to beat his dependence on cocaine and to reinvent his sound with the help of Iggy Pop, Brian Eno, and Tony Visconti. The output of that storied period, known as the Berlin triptych, occupies a sacred place in Bowie's body of work. Three albums, 1977's *Low* and *Heroes*, followed by *Lodger* in 1979, remain essential listening not only because the songs range from the instrumentally gothic "Warsawza" to the crowd-pleasing "Heroes," but also because they anticipate the '80s, when Bowie would reinvent himself once more as the poperatic singer of "Modern Love" and "Let's Dance."

If Bowie has been metamorphosing for decades now—so many ch-ch-changes since his origins in British psychedelia—Tobias Rüther's *Heroes: David Bowie in Berlin* only confuses matters more. While it is clear the author wants to approach Bowie from a wider cultural angle—to his credit, Rüther has an encyclopedic knowledge of high, low, and popular art—he fails to do justice to an extraordinary phase in a truly chameleonic career. In a book that is less about the music than about the author's musings on Bowie's wider importance (very little of which pertains to the Spaceman's sexuality), Rüther rightfully calls the artist's Berlin phase the "most daring music of his career."

Lacking in continuity and focus, the book's six chapters range from Bowie's arrival in West Berlin to his triumphant return in 1987 for the "Concert for Berlin," when he rallied an audience of 70,000 still under the shadow of the Wall, which would fall in two years' time. The book's translator has done the author no favors. You know you're in trouble when a book's opening sentence reads: "And from right here, says the tour guide, at that time you could see the Wall." The content, too, is frequently cockamamie: Rüther, who loses focus easily, suddenly pulls in the Red Hot Chili Peppers' 1991 album *Blood Sugar Sex Magik* only to posit that the "added K" comes from "kteis," the word in ancient Greek for "vagina." Good to know.

Rüther's love of innuendo is similarly problematic. The fifth chapter concerns the relationship between Bowie and French philosopher Michel Foucault when the two met at the nightclub Dschungel (West Berlin's version of Studio 54). A somewhat accurate observation—"Both Foucault and Bowie see sexual emancipation as a means through which one is free to define oneself or reinvent oneself"—is coupled with something more salacious: Foucault and Bowie "got to know one another better than simply on paper." But there is an even more insidious form of insinuation throughout *Heroes*, which is Rüther's obsessive mischaracterization of Bowie as a Nazi sympathizer. While it's true that Bowie allegedly made a Nazi salute during his "Station to Station" tour in 1976, he himself has said the photograph caught him mid-wave and that he was deranged from heavy drug use.

Indeed the notion of a goose-stepping Bowie is Rüther's idée fixe. A perfectly fine chapter, "The Party on the Brink," begins strongly by linking Bowie's æsthetic sensibility to philosopher Ernst Bloch but loses it-

self again with talk of Bowie "fantasizing about the Nazis" and Margaret Thatcher's likeness to Hitler. Even Brian Eno isn't safe: Rüther reports that he was once spotted, in drag, on the London underground, "totally absorbed" in Shirer's *The Rise and Fall of the Third Reich*. Why this most damaging of accusations? In "China Girl," when Bowie sings of "visions of swastikas in my head," those visions are meant to terrify. And in "It's No Game," Bowie ridicules fascism as exactly that: no laughing matter. Besides, what kind of neo-Nazi tries to make a transgender style trendy and marries a Somali fashion model?

The only useful contribution found in *Heroes* is its description of Bowie's first introduction to Christopher Isherwood, whom he met through David Hockney, not in Berlin but in L.A. in 1976. And it's Isherwood who provides the best description of this scattershot biography. In his *Berlin Stories*, he describes his "reasoning" as "bounded by guesses and possibilities as vague and limitless as the darkness." Rüther's book might well be described in similar terms, and again the feeling is one of relief on saying goodbye to Berlin.

Colin Carman PhD teaches British and American literature at Colorado Mesa University.

Visceral Reactions

ROSEMARY BOOTH

I'm Already Disturbed Please Come In: Parasites, Social Media and Other Planetary Disturbances (A Memoir, of Sorts)

by Gabrielle Glancy

Oneiric Press. 192 pages, $16.95

To begin with, the disturbances that rock the author's life in this lively, offbeat sort-of memoir are not by any stretch planetary—except perhaps in the narrow sense of being wandering or erratic. Nor have they been provoked by social media as such, in spite of the plentiful Facebook screen shots included. Instead, what caused Gabrielle Glancy's ills turn out to be hordes of unseen and fairly common freeloaders, most of them parasites: in a word, worms.

I'm Already Disturbed is structured as a series of short essays but moves at the brisk pace of a novel, taking the reader on a quest to find the cause of the author's debilitating and curious symptoms, and their cure. Glancy adds more complicated pursuits to her medical search, the first in the realm of relationships and the second about writing. Coming to grips with the Big M—mortality—undergirds all three stories, perhaps not surprising given that the author is turning fifty years old.

The scene is Oakland, California, where Glancy lives. A poet and essayist, the writer founded and directs New Visions Learning, a college admissions counseling service. Her previous books include *The Art of the College Essay* and *Best College Essays 2014,* which she edited. Her attempts to find medical treatment form the main story line, and it is a compelling one. Her puzzling symptoms begin about two years after adopting a baby boy from Guatemala (following four miscarriages), and only a week after meeting Sudha Faraday, who also has a young son. Glancy experiences palpitations, a foggy head, and lack of energy that compel her to find relief by lying down on the floor during a routine workday. Soon she's coping with a tightening jaw, a stomach that expands and gets hard, and feelings of extreme weakness. She felt "like a huge throbbing animal, one big whale of a nerve like the mother tree in *Avatar*."

The symptoms erupt suddenly, leading to multiple emergency room visits followed by appointments with internists, cardiologists, and other specialists. Reluctant to visit doctors—especially when sick, which "takes all the fun out of it"—the worried writer nonetheless seeks their help. She reports on these encounters with verve and dark humor. Some doctors are curt, others merely dismissive, suggesting that her problems are psychological. All of them fail to parse the patient's own description of her symptoms, instead ordering a raft of EKGs, EEGs, CT scans, and neurological exams that lead nowhere and leave her increasingly distraught.

After nearly a year of struggling with job responsibilities and childcare, Glancy has a breakthrough: "One day I realized it wasn't all in my head, it was in my stomach." Unfortunately, her gastroenterologist tags a small duodenal ulcer as the culprit, and treatment proves useless. In despair, the author follows the advice of an old friend and meets with an "integrative medicine" guru who lacks a medical degree but does have common sense and the ability to listen. A simple stool test identifies an infestation of parasites that Glancy had probably picked up years before, during stays in Guatemala or Egypt, along with a bacterium possibly (and, if so, ironically) contracted more recently, in a local ER.

Treatment for the infestations is arduous and lengthy, but it yields improvement. At the same time, however, other dilemmas are on the patient's mind, demanding attention. For one thing, having endured several heart-crushing love affairs, the memoirist doubts that she can ever form a lasting romantic bond. However, when Faraday, who sustained her through months of health crises, helps her get through what would be the final attack, Glancy is hit hard. The two share an intimate afternoon swim, and the author finds herself moving toward commitment: "I could fall for this girl, I thought. I'm really in trouble now."

Glancy's concern about her writing forms a third story line. Having had poems published earlier in *The Paris Review* and *The New Yorker*, she had stopped sending out material in the wake of a disastrous romance. "I guess you could say I went underground," she says, "but only for about twenty-five years." While in the hospital for observation after an attack, she dreams

Rosemary Booth is a writer and photographer living in Cambridge, Massachusetts.

of receiving the Nobel Prize for literature. Impossible, or clearly improbable—but indicative of her longing.

During waking hours, she seems exquisitely aware of what others have been writing and envious of writers such as Eileen Myles or Robert Hass, whose poetry she admires and whom she counts as friends. Internet postings of these writers remind her of lost opportunities, and a picture of Hass after he was beaten at an Occupy Berkeley demonstration reminds her of how she has dropped out, not just from the literary world but also from social activism.

Ambition and achievement might not be perfectly aligned, but Glancy's direct, spare sentences and almost offhand reflections speak credibly to the mix of feelings that someone in similar distress might have. Her prose style recalls Myles' set of travel essays, *The Importance of Being Iceland,* as well as Anne Carson's book of elegiac essays, *Nox*. Like Carson's memoir, *I'm Already Disturbed* displays photographic images that prompt the writer's musings, in this case Facebook screen shots. The reproduced pictures nimbly convey the writer's associations and thoughts, although a few of the reproduced text images are too blurry to decipher.

From the evidence here, Facebook would appear to be of mixed worth for writers. Some screen shots help carry the memoir's plot; for example, when Glancy can't locate the photo of a fly made out of dust bunnies that she had saved, we sense the tension and can exult with her when it re-emerges. At the same time, immersion in social media looks like a distraction. "When I feel good, I tell the story of what happened," the author states. "When I can't do that, I facebook."

I'm Already Disturbed offers a narrative and sub-tales that converge in credible resolution, with the writer returning to health, more broadly understood. Glancy comes to realize that life in fact is limited (a third writer-pal, David Rakoff, has died), and that joy comes less from electronic exchanges than from engaging with work that matters, and from face-to-face encounters with family and friends. When the boys finally ask why she's been sick, Glancy doesn't hesitate. "'Mommo's had worms,' I said. ... They looked at me amazed. I drew a picture of an oval with little yellow squiggles inside. 'That's my stomach. And those are the worms.'" Her straightforward reply affirms the calm awareness that marks the conclusion of this vivid, intriguing book.

The Bisexual's Dilemma

YOAV SIVAN

Fire Shut Up in My Bones
by Charles Blow
Houghton Mifflin. 240 pages, $27.

THE AMERICAN DREAM is not one but rather a kaleidoscope of dreams; this is the rural Southern version. Charles Blow's life to date can be comfortably divided into two roughly equal parts. The first half, the subject of this memoir, was passed largely "on the black side of town," in Gibsland, Louisiana—"right in the middle of nowhere"—where, the youngest of five sons, he was raised by a mother of principle and practicality who provided and cared for the family while working for a degree in education and becoming a home economics teacher. His good-for-nothing father was mostly absent after his parents separated when Blow was five. But if mother and sons lived in poverty, they were well off enough to carry themselves with dignity.

The second half of Blow's life is compressed into the final chapter. Now 44, Blow is an op-ed columnist for *The New York Times*, famous for weaving survey data with commentary. This part of his life began with hard work and a stroke of luck. The latter occurred at a journalists' job fair in Atlanta, where he impressed the *Times*' representatives with his diligence and determination. He was made a graphics intern, the newspaper's first, and at the tender age of 24 he was running the graphics department.

That's quite a distance from the small, informally segregated town of his youth, whose only cemetery had a fence separating black and white graves. With an eye for detail, he paints a vivid portrait of rural poverty in America. Unlike urban poverty, rural poverty is vast and uninterrupted, stretching as wide as the eye can see. Almost everyone was poor, only some were poorer than others. Blow remembers the family house as minimally furnished; food was never thrown away; and the small backyard was used to grow crops. Some nearby relatives lived in houses without running water.

With urban poverty, the sense of deprivation is accentuated by proximity to the city's riches. In contrast, at least for Blow's family, scarcity didn't translate into material craving but instead forged a mentality of self-sufficiency. For example, Blow describes spending "many Saturdays at the city dumps" to find use in what others threw away, but these memories are surprisingly intertwined with remembrances of family happiness. "Being a child with nothing, it didn't take much to satisfy me," he writes. If anything, the hardscrabble existence worked indirectly to suppress this child's want of attention. A "quiet, introspective boy" who spent lonely afternoons drawing, he did long "to be chosen," but—keenly aware how much his mother worked and worried—was ashamed to demand attention.

The title *Fire Shut Up in My Bones* is taken from the book of Jeremiah, and the prophet's next words are: "and I am weary with holding it in, and I cannot."

When Blow was seven, he was molested by a male cousin. The effect was both immediate and long-lasting: he became gun-shy when around other boys, ever suspicious of people's intentions. His schoolwork suffered so much that he was placed in a slow class, from which he was rescued by his

Yoav Sivan is a New York-based journalist. He maintains a website at www.YoavSivan.com.

Charles Blow, 2014. Photo by Beowulf Sheehan.

mother, who simply refused to allow it. Years later, he would be tested as gifted and graduate from high school as valedictorian. He then attended Grambling State University nearby, majoring in journalism.

The incident with his cousin had another importance: it became the uneasy backdrop for Blow's incipient physical attraction to men. "It was in my mind that I now fused together abuse and attraction," he writes. In the ensuing years he fought to repress his feelings of homosexual attraction. There were a few bursts of religious enthusiasm; in high school and college some sex with women; in college he joined a fraternity known for its severe hazing. One incident from high school stands out: During a break in a basketball game, Blow crossed the court toward his mother. "Something in my gait" must have alarmed her, he recalls, and "she laid into me in front of everyone. 'Don't you run like that!'"

The tone of the book is that of a wise adult who's able to look back knowingly, albeit empathetically, upon his younger self. As for the adult who emerged from these uncertain beginnings, Blow ended up marrying a woman he met in college, had three children with her, and eventually divorced. He also experimented with men. A description of a traumatic evening in a gay bar illustrates both his burgeoning desires and his lingering inhibitions.

The tone changes when he tries to analyze his sexual identity. "I would come to know what the world called people like me: bisexuals," he reluctantly concludes. To be sure, the overt homophobia of his youth is long gone; now the social pressure, even in liberal New York, is to decide whether he's gay or straight. Not given to understatement, he suggests that bisexuals are perceived as "the hated ones. The bastard breed. The 'tragic mulattos' of sexual identity." It's safe to assume that writing this book was itself part of the effort to address this dilemma.

Song of a Social Butterfly

ALAN HELMS

Rebel Souls:
Walt Whitman and America's First Bohemians
by Justin Martin
Da Capo Press. 339 pages, $27.99

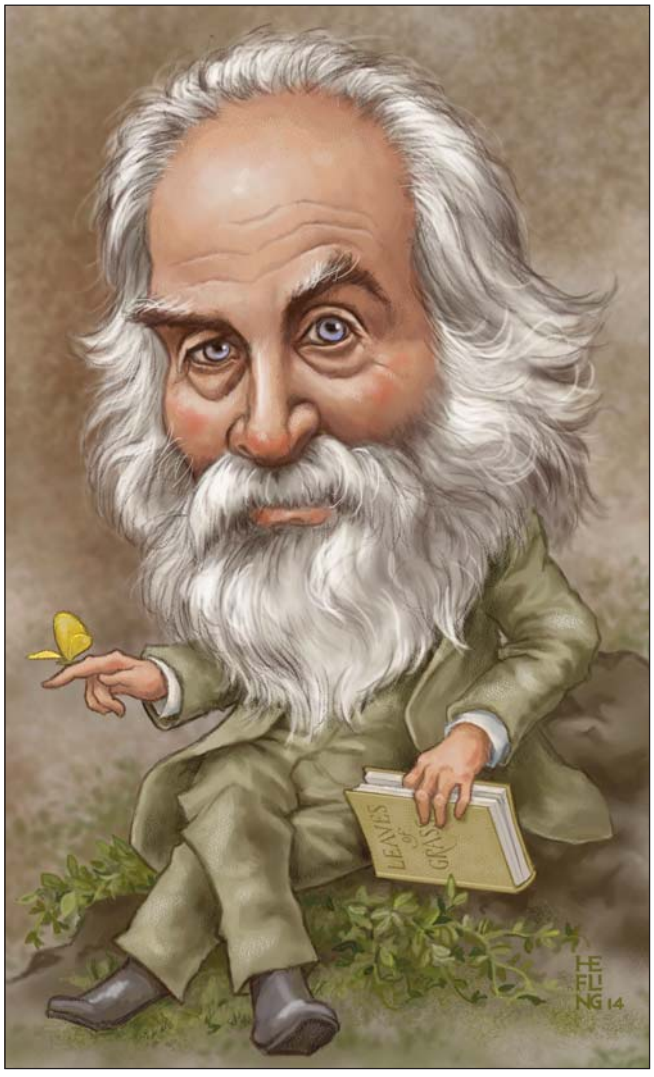
JUSTIN MARTIN, the author of *Rebel Souls: Walt Whitman and America's First Bohemians*, is clearly a man of eclectic interests, having previously written biographies of Frederick Law Olmsted, Ralph Nader, and Alan Greenspan. He has now turned his attention to the biography of an entire group.

The group consisted of a number of writers and performers of varying talents who gathered in mid-19th century Manhattan at Pfaff's, a basement saloon on Broadway between Houston and Bleecker Streets. The Diaghilev of this motley crew was the journalist Henry Clapp, a New Englander whose radical politics and avant-garde æsthetics had taken him to Paris in 1849, where he became so enamored with "la vie bohème" that he stayed for three years, returning to New York determined to create an American version of the cultural life he'd found so thrilling in Paris. He also launched a monthly journal, the *Saturday Press*, which despite having fewer than 5,000 subscribers became the most important organ of advanced writing in the U.S. (Among other coups, it published Whitman's "Out of the Cradle Endlessly Rocking" and a short story called "The Celebrated Jumping Frog of Calaveras County" by an unknown writer who called himself Mark Twain.)

Whitman was the foremost member of the group, which also included Artemus Ward, America's leading humorist; the actor Edwin Booth (brother of Lincoln's assassin); Hugh Ludlow, author of the scandalous and wildly popular "The Hasheesh Eater"; Charles Warren Stoddard, an early proponent of homosexual rights; and Adah Menken, whose body stocking performances in potboiler dramas made her a trans-Atlantic sex symbol. Nightly gatherings at Pfaff's were free-wheeling, free-thinking affairs that also functioned as a mutual help and admiration society. It seems clear that Whitman benefitted most from the group, joining at a low point in his career just after the second edition of *Leaves of Grass* had appeared to little fanfare and much opprobrium. Clapp was so convinced of Whitman's genius that he used the *Saturday Press* to promote *Leaves* at every opportunity, publishing 25 items by or about Whitman in a single year.

Whitman was also drawn to Pfaff's because it was one of the few commercial places in New York that welcomed homosexuals. The Clapp group met in a private alcove, but Whitman also spent time in the larger room, which accommodated what he called his "beautiful boys" and "my darling, dearest boys." "We all loved each other more than we supposed," he wrote to a friend, expressing the sad hindsight of the closeted homosexual. In fact, Pfaff's was as close to a gay bar as anything mid-19th century Manhattan had to offer, and it provided the setting for some of the poems in the homoerotic "Calamus" sequence that first appeared in the 1860 edition of *Leaves of Grass*.

Although a worthwhile book, *Rebel Souls* has several problems. Errors of grammar and diction abound, and tenses shift from past to present and back for no good reason. Criminals are "hung," not hanged; a Maryland battlefield is "blood-sotted"; and Martin succumbs to the inelegant practice of creating nouns by adding "ness" to adjectives ("indiscriminateness" being one of many ugly results). He's also guilty of the biographer's sin of attributing to his subjects things he can't possibly know. When Adah Menken attempts suicide by swallowing poison, we're told that "She lifted the vial to her lips and took a long draw." Maybe it was a long draw, maybe it was a quick gulp, but whatever it was, this sort of thing is annoying and unnecessary. Sometimes Martin forgets that his reader isn't as familiar with his material as he is: "No American



Alan Helms is professor emeritus of English at UMass-Boston and the University of Paris. His dance reviews can be found at DanceTabs.com.

writer ever had such chances of success as Fitz-James O'Brien ... and but one American writer ever threw such chances away so recklessly." And who might that one reckless writer be? We're not told. "Clapp had spent time with women such as Octavie"—who is ... a countess? a courtesan? You'll search in vain for an explanation.

More serious is Martin's skewed assessment of Whitman's poetry. He seems to admire "O Captain, My Captain," a hugely popular poem then as now, but one of the worst and least characteristic of things Whitman ever wrote. (It embarrassed him for the rest of his life.) Martin says that the 1860 third edition of *Leaves* is, in part, "obscene," a breathtaking opinion that parrots the Puritanical view of Whitman's most benighted critics, and he adds that in that same edition "Moments of supernatural clarity follow muddied stretches of utter artistic chaos." Whitman can be metaphorically dense, yes, but artistically chaotic? Never. Such grossly wrong-headed views are only slightly mitigated by Martin's placing Whitman in the company of Homer and Dante, which is precisely where he belongs.

Despite these caveats, however, the book is both engaging and helpful, of value to scholars and general readers alike. Martin is a companionable guide who juggles his large cast of characters with aplomb, and his narrative line is always clear and energetic. He also provides helpful and fascinating cultural and historical context throughout. During the decade or so that Clapp's crowd gathered at Pfaff's, the United States went through seismic events. The *Dred Scott* decision of 1857 was followed by the Panic of the same year, the first worldwide economic crisis. Two years later saw John Brown's attempted raid at Harper's Ferry, and the following year the newly formed Republican Party nominated Abraham Lincoln as its presidential candidate. Within months of Lincoln's election, the Civil War began, and four years later it was concluded on the eve of his assassination. All during this period, Congress was at least as dysfunctional as it is today, if you can imagine such a thing—sometimes erupting in violent brawls on the floors of both chambers. (In 1856 Senator Preston Brooks of South Carolina caned Senator Charles Sumner of Massachusetts so badly that Sumner never fully recovered.)

This historical and cultural context enriches Martin's narrative and also provides the opportunity for delightful discoveries along the way, such as the news that "The phrase *well rounded* derives from phrenology and is based on the notion that an actualized person has a nicely shaped head, without any distortive bumps." Notwithstanding its flaws, then, *Rebel Souls* is an enjoyable and a valuable read, and Justin Martin is to be commended for shining a light on this neglected but influential group in our cultural history.

A Novel about Writing a Novel

JACK MILLER

Miranda's Book
by Alfred Corn
Eyewear Publishing. 323 pages, $20.

YOU'VE MADE A KILLING. Going with your lover to retrieve a portfolio of art, you somehow manage to bring about the death of someone you dislike, someone the reader will no doubt dislike. What do you do? Call 911, or head out with your hot new lover on the open road? Fortunately for us, Miranda chooses the latter action.

Alfred Corn's second novel is an olio: one part *On The Road*, two parts existential examination of life, with a dash of Iris Murdoch. One character's choice leads to an inevitable clash and transformation of another. As novels go, *Miranda's Book* employs a rather complex form to tell its tale. It is in fact a novel within a novel, but with a twist. We learn early on that a book called "Miranda's Book" is being written by an accomplished African-American writer living in Brooklyn. His niece is in prison. Why she is there and the justification for her fatal actions are the subject matter of the book he is writing, a book to which we as readers are given privileged access. Mark Shreve is the writer and he appears in his own novel as Uncle Matthew. His niece is Marguerite and her fictional name in his novel is Miranda.

Not only does the novel within a novel provide us with a detailed, exquisite account of Miranda's journey through three countries and her mental processes and feelings along the way; it also presents the author, her uncle, who has his own feelings and views about what led up to the killing and his niece's flight after the deed. Consequently, Uncle Mark Shreve is as much on an existential quest as his niece, Marguerite, the Miranda of his novel.

If all this sounds too convoluted to be readily grasped, it isn't. The chapters describing the uncle/author's point of view, misgivings, and thoughts about the ethics and the æsthetics of what he's doing blend with the primary story, giving it an added dimension. In one of the uncle's self-analysical chapters, he recalls Gore Vidal: "Gore, for his part, ridiculed me even to my face, saying I was a pathetic closet case who wrote about heterosexuals with no firsthand knowledge of the subject." Is this true, or do we believe Shreve's rebuttal? Are we reading about Shreve's reflections, or author Alfred Corn's?

Furthermore, when we read, for instance, that Miranda is on a long flight enjoying a novel by Trollope, we are simultaneously aware that it may be the real-life uncle who has read Trollope, not the real niece, Marguerite, in the fictional form of Miranda. One of the mysteries the reader is left to ponder is the degree to which what happens in the novel within the novel, *Miranda's Book*, is true to the niece he is defending. Miranda is always also her uncle, the writer. As he says himself, "I could hardly tell Marguerite's story without bringing in my own."

Add to the mix that Miranda is half Jewish and half African-American, while her uncle is a well-to-do, highly intellectual,

Jack Miller is a teacher and writer based in Atlanta.

gay black writer living in Brooklyn, and you see how rich this novel is in its exploration of culture and love circa 1990. What is it like to be half black, half Jewish, and married to a bore of a WASP? Miranda early on sees the emptiness of her married life. Her husband is self absorbed, possessive, and cheating on her while nonetheless controlling her life. First engaging in her own affair with a bisexual man, Miranda ultimately leaves her vile husband and his mistress for art and Guillermo, a handsome, artistic Latin lover. Having broken from her husband and his ego, Miranda finds her own interest in art and love again. Meanwhile, she attends the opening of the controversial show of Robert Mapplethorpe's photographs in her hometown of Cincinnati. Public discussions about Mapplethorpe and censorship, æsthetic ruminations by both Uncle Matthew and Miranda, and the ensuing trial that acquitted the gallery of obscenity charges all reveal more about Miranda as she embarks on her journey.

The novel within a novel takes us to Canada, the remote woods of Maine, New York, Ohio, and finally Mexico, where Miranda experiences the Day of the Dead. The reader is lavished with Alfred Corn's poetic vision of San Miguel de Allende and the enchanted town of Pátzcuaro with its mystical lake high in the Sierras, where the veil between the living and dead is diaphanous. All along the way, Miranda's character evolves and grows. Her revelations and her epiphanies coincide with the insights of her uncle both in and out of the interior novel. The uncle, living in Brooklyn and writing his novel, becomes so interesting that we begin to hope for a third novel about Mark Shreve.

In the mind of her gay uncle, a writer and cultivated man, Miranda confronts dilemma after dilemma. She looks at herself critically, realizing at times that she has had a privileged existence, more than enhanced by the generosity and the rescue by her uncle. Have her circumstances corrupted her? Is she the modern version of a liberated woman, or someone who deserves to be in prison? Is her uncle successful in defending her? Has she even committed a crime at all? If you're looking for a novel with huge, archetypal characters making sweeping philosophical conclusions, as in Dostoevsky, or the paranoid and surreal visions of Kafka (also mentioned as among Miranda's books), this may not be the novel for you. If you want a thought-provoking book filled with adventure, one that is expressed in poetic, evocative language, including some provocative sex scenes, and if you want a book that contains quandaries concerning life choices, justice, and ethics, not to mention a look at the creative process of writing itself, then by all means visit the pages of *Miranda's Book*.

After Them, the *Déluge*

Vernon A. Rosario

Twilight of the Belle Époque:
The Paris of Picasso, Stravinsky, Proust, Renault, Marie Curie, Gertrude Stein, and Their Friends through the Great War

by Mary McAuliffe

Rowman & Littlefield. 418 pages, $29.95

Few periods in French history are as glittering and vibrant as the *Belle Époque*, the prosperous decades of peace between France's ignominious defeat in the Franco-Prussian War (1871) and the carnage of the Great War (1914-18). We are still awed by the urban achievements of the period: Georges-Eugène Haussmann's monumental remodeling of Paris was completed; the Eiffel Tower (1889) soared to a record height for a manmade structure; new electric street lamps dazzled the world above ground and the Métro bustled below. The era's varied artistic production still reliably supplies blockbuster exhibits of Art Nouveau, Impressionism, Post-impressionism, and Cubism for the world's museums.

Mary McAuliffe's *Twilight of the Belle Époque* inevitably delights with its evocation of the glitterati of Paris from 1900 until the end of World War I. (Her 2011 volume, *Dawn of the Belle Époque,* explored the years 1871 to 1900.) Each chapter covers a year and darts back and forth between scores of celebrated artists, authors, composers, actors, dancers, and a few titans of science and technology, such as Marie and Pierre Curie, André Citroën, and the Renault brothers. It reads somewhat like a historical concordance of celebrities' journals as we peep into their dinner parties, concerts, and sexual dalliances.

In light of McAuliffe's particular attention to the amorous affairs of the rich and famous, it's curious how little information there is on the famous homosexuals of the *Belle Époque*. She provides a couple of paragraphs on the dramatic affair between dancer Vaslav Nijinsky and impresario Sergei Diaghilev, but only passing mention of the love lives of other luminaries that might have been spotlighted: Gertrude Stein and Alice B. Toklas; musical patroness Princesse Edmond de Polignac (*née* Winnaretta Singer); novelist Marcel Proust; and writer and filmmaker Jean Cocteau.

Although the political historical context mainly serves as a backdrop to the biographical anecdotes, I found it particularly moving how directly engaged in the war effort almost all of these celebrities were. Many men served on the front lines; the women helped transport and care for the wounded. The war may have dimmed the lights of Paris but it ignited the patriotic heroism of even the affluent and bohemian. *Twilight of the Belle Époque* provides a charming meander through the City of Lights and its astonishingly rich cast of cultural icons.

Vernon A. Rosario is a psychiatrist and medical historian who has contributed to these pages since the mid-1990s.

A Married Man in the '60s

Dennis Altman

JD: A Novel
by Mark Merlis
Terrace Books. 272 pages, $26.95

Yet again, Mark Merlis has written a deeply satisfying novel, one whose voices continue to echo in your head long after you've finished reading it. Merlis' fourth novel may be his most shocking yet, touching as it does on incestuous desire, but it also revisits his preoccupations with the gay past, first explored in 1994's *American Studies*. In the first novel Merlis explored the world of McCarthyist America, when homosexuality became conflated with Communism as an existential threat, sufficient to lead "men like that" to shoot themselves. In *JD* he moves forward almost two decades into the 1960s, thus creating—along with his 2004 novel *Man About Town*—a kind of trilogy of American gay life.

JD moves across several decades, as Martha, the widow of once renowned author Jonathan Ascher, is approached by a potential biographer of her husband, a meeting which in turn leads her back to her husband's diaries from the 1960s. Jonathan died not long after the death of their son Mickey, who was drafted to fight in Vietnam and died soon after, not as a war hero but from a heroin overdose. Now Martha, herself moving toward death, is forced to confront the realities of a marriage held together by inertia and mutual, unexpressed love for their son.

Or perhaps it's not unexpressed: Jonathan's diaries bring double revelation, both about the extent of his homosexual sorties and about his constant longing to become close to their son. The main strength of the book is in the way Merlis allows both characters to reveal themselves, neither of them in ways that are particularly likable. Jonathan is self-righteous, self-important, self-pitying, ready to take offense at everyone; the book takes its title from his one successful novel, which for a time seemed to make him famous, after which he never managed to write anything of significance.

Self-pity is also an affliction for Martha, who seems to have spent her life regretting her marriage. She is deeply homophobic, though in ways that are hardly surprising given the number of nights her husband was out cruising the bars, parks, and tearooms. Martha—is the name a conscious reference to *Who's Afraid of Virginia Woolf?*?—is bitter, unsatisfied, ever mourning the loss of her son and perhaps her husband, and very aware of aging alone. But while Martha is the narrator of the novel, the real disclosures come not from her but from the long dead Jonathan, whose diaries from the 1960s allow Merlis to depict a world of self-loathing in which Jonathan increasingly abases himself. And that is the right verb, as his most common sexual position appears to be on his knees. Of one trick he remarks: "that I was kneeling in piss seemed to him a logical sequel [*sic*] of what we had been up to. (Or he up to, I down to.)"

All of Merlis' novels are anchored by an awareness of the mismatch between political opinions and personal life, so while Jonathan sees himself as profoundly radical—at one point he fears he's being displaced by Herbert Marcuse as a guru for young radicals—he finds the idea of organizing around one's sexuality both threatening and perhaps slightly comical. This is not an uncommon view; Gore Vidal would make jibes about the futility of gay politics, and the Australian Nobel novelist Patrick White was scathing in his attitudes toward a politics based on sexual identity.

Jonathan's diaries acknowledge Stonewall, but it comes too late to change his life, and he echoes an old Marxist position that "the fellatio party" will not really challenge the techno-capitalist order. There is a resistance, not uncommon at the time, to giving up the furtiveness of a shadow world of sex and bars, even as he rails against it. But, as the diaries reveal, his deepest feelings are for his son, who arouses both filial and erotic desires.

Mickey, then, is the central character who holds Martha and Jonathan together, but we never see the world through Mickey's eyes, and he is as damaged as his parents, as unable to construct a fully satisfying life. The bonds that hold the three of them together also help destroy Mickey, but Merlis is too good an author to spell this out. One finishes *JD* with a sense of both satisfaction and frustration, because it is a novel that weaves together the casualties of family and unaccepted sexual desires into a remarkable, if depressing, story of the U.S. in an era of huge social change.

Dennis Altman's most recent book is The End of the Homosexual? *(Univ. of Queensland Press, 2013).*

Tune In, Drop Out

Mary Meriam

Radiomen
by Eleanor Lerman
The Permanent Press. 288 pages, $11.99

Eleanor Lerman's first book of poetry, *Armed Love*, published when she was 21, was a finalist for the 1973 National Book Award. *The New York Times* described the book as "X-rated" for its explicit explorations of sexuality and gender. After publishing a second book in 1975, Lerman stopped publishing for 25 years. In 2001, Sarabande Books commissioned a book of poems, and that was enough to get Lerman publishing again. *Radiomen* is her eighth book since 2001, with many awards in between, including Guggenheim and NEA fellowships and the Lenore Marshall Poetry Prize given by the American Academy of Poets and *The Nation*. I'm proud to have published Eleanor Lerman's poems in *Lavender Review*.

In Lerman's third novel, *Radiomen*, every detail and device works in the service of the whole; the book is a wonder of cohesion. The protagonist and narrator, Laurie Perzin (as in person?), is a marginalized misfit—restless, alienated, and angry. Laurie has no identity. She's a shadow person living in a shadowy place, working the dark hours in a bar with no windows

and with several TVs on at once blasting sports. This bar, The Endless Weekend, located at JFK Airport, bathes her with noise at her bartending job. When she gets home, which is in a remote industrial section of Queens, she's bathed with the noise of a place called Automobile Alley. In the first dozen pages of the book, we're bombarded with references to the underworld and other worlds of trucking, smuggling, UFOs, telepathy, television, ghost signals, the Internet, ships, jets, clocks, and satellites. But all these forms of transportation and communication are only another source of alienation for Laurie, preventing her from tuning in to her own thoughts.

However, Laurie likes to listen to her radio. One night she calls in to a late-night talk show and we're introduced to the host, Jean Shepherd, and his guest, a psychic called Ravenette. We'll learn how apt these characters' names are as the pages turn. Shepherd and Ravenette both seem to tune in to Laurie, but she's tough and confrontational; their meetings will end in near-fistfights and *fuck-you*'s. Laurie reports that she has had both girlfriends and boyfriends, that she lost touch with her family, and that her mother died young. All this helps explain her alienation and anger. Laurie's tentative "radio" connections build throughout the book into a satisfying network.

As a metaphor, "reception and tuning in a specific frequency" refers to Laurie Perzin's own ability to tune into herself, which is what this story is about. She fights it at first but is slowly receptive. Helpful dogs, whose dark eyes glitter like stars in the night sky, mysteriously appear one at a time and lean against her leg. Her neighbor, an illegal immigrant from Mali, appreciates the kind things Laurie has done for her, and gives her (with difficulty, since Laurie argues about everything) a Dogon dog. Some interesting Dogon culture figures into the story. A cult leader, Raymond Gilmartin, and some of his followers place dangerous obstacles in Laurie's path. Gilmartin is described in a way that makes him sound slightly satanic, like an Antichrist figure: "As Raymond spoke, his voice remained smooth as oil, but I heard something else in it: the visual image that came to me of little fires burning around the edges." In contrast, the otherworldly radio man's pissed-off sissy hiss is not to be missed.

Laurie learns how to calm down enough to listen attentively, to think, and to fight antagonists in a smart way. By the end of the novel, she has tuned in to something truly wonderful, and she feels "energized, awake, alert." Amazingly, that's how *Radiomen* made me feel.

Mary Meriam is the author of Conjuring My Leafy Muse *and* Girlie Calendar.

LGBT History 101

Chris Freeman

U.S. Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual, and Transgender History
Edited by Leila J. Rupp and Susan K. Freeman
University of Wisconsin Press. 383 pages, $29.95

The times, they have a-changed. In 2009, the California state legislature passed SB48, the FAIR (Fair, Accurate, Inclusive, and Responsible) Education Act, mandating the inclusion of LGBT history and culture into high school curricula. But, in this era of testing, testing, and more testing, how do teachers incorporate queer content into their courses—and what exactly should they be teaching to teenagers?

Editors Leila J. Rupp and Susan K. Freeman have facilitated that discussion with their comprehensive anthology, *U.S. Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual, and Transgender History*. The book features more than 25 essays by teachers and professors about strategies they have used in the classroom and about some of the difficulties that inevitably accompany such subject matter.

Part One, on the challenges of teaching these controversial issues, begins with an essay by John D'Emilio, one of the most distinguished scholars of LGBT history in America. His offering, "Forty Years and Counting," which provides the long view of queer studies as an academic field going back to the gay liberation era, is an effective and informative look back at where we came from and how we got to this point. D'Emilio notes that "in the 1970s, there was not yet a conversation in LGBT history." Decades later, he found that even his more sophisticated students still didn't know anything about their own history: "Their ignorance was not their fault. It was evidence that the queer past does not circulate widely in the everyday lives or the formal education of Americans."

The book is an antidote to that unfortunate reality. The footnotes point readers to useful sources, little known facts, and classic works in the field. Some authors of those classic works—such as D'Emilio, Marc Stein, and Leila J. Rupp, the volume's co-editor—are represented here. Part Two, about some specific topics in LGBT history, features Stein's discussion of how he teaches Supreme Court cases affecting queer lives and issues; both the rulings and the opinions come into play, indicating not only how the court has made decisions but also how its rulings reflect and sometimes change thinking in the broader public. Included in this section are essays about 19th-century lives, about World War II and its impact on queer communities, about 1960s radicalism and the gay civil rights movement, and about AIDS, marriage equality, and the military's changing policies on gay personnel.

Part Three considers "hidden history" and its rediscovery, using oral history, fiction, media, and popular culture for teaching purposes. The work of Vito Russo in particular plays a key role in this section, as does Jonathan Ned Katz' great on-line resource, Outhistory.org. Sharon Ullman, a professor at Bryn Mawr College, ends her essay "Popular Culture: Using Televi-

sion, Film, and the Media to Explore LGBT History" with a provocative question that she poses for her students: "As a final exercise on the use of popular culture, we might all ask our students what they see today and ask them to imagine what their children might see 'tomorrow.'"

While the book's primary audience is teachers and scholars, general readers interested in what kids are learning these days—or could be learning—will find this informative, readable, and educational. As the editors suggest: "What a historical perspective brings is a deeper understanding of why change has happened, and why some things have not changed. Legal, social, political, urban, and cultural history lend multiple dimensions to thinking about the queer past and present, and, in turn, the history of same-sex sexuality and gender queerness expands our understanding of all these facets of history." We can only hope that learning this material will have an impact on the attitudes of young people, offering insights that they'll carry with them into adulthood, into voting booths and work places, and back to their families.

Chris Freeman teaches English and gender studies at USC. He is co-editor, with James Berg, of The American Isherwood.

Does Marriage Matter?

Dale Boyer

Untangling the Knot:
Queer Voices on Marriage, Relationships, and Identity
Edited by Carter Sickels
Ooligan Press. 248 pages, $16.95

In an era when so much effort has been directed at gaining the right to marriage for all couples, gay or straight, one might expect *Untangling the Knot* to be a somewhat academic rehash of the arguments for and against these efforts. One might also expect the book to be deadly dull. One would be wrong on both counts. Carter Sickels, the editor of this lively collection, has cast a much wider net and wound up with something far more interesting: a group of essays that explore the question of whether marriage equality is a goal on which we should be spending all our political capital and, more broadly still, how same-sex marriage stands to change GLBT culture and identity.

One of the old saws directed against marriage has always been that it leads to the loss of a person's identity. Another is that it perpetuates traditional patriarchal values that many find repugnant. But, of course, the very notion of identity and traditional gender roles gets skewed in gay culture. For instance, Casey Plett's "The Days of the Phoenix and the Emerald City" begins by talking about a day in 2003 "when I still thought I was a guy," and continues to describe her personal odyssey surrounding transgender issues (a large number of these essays have to do with the transgender experience).

When a person's identity itself is fluid and there's no traditional assumption of gender roles, the whole debate surrounding marriage takes an interesting turn. Ben Anderson-Nathe argues that, rather than focusing so intently on gaining the right to marry, the gay movement should focus on "queering relationship[s] and family" instead. He and others in the collection maintain that many gay people have very successfully and creatively constructed new versions of what constitutes a family, and that by trying to mimic a straight version of society, we're actually taking a step backwards. Joseph Nicholas DeFilippis laments the loss of civil unions as an alternative to marriage—a more flexible option that allowed straight people to join in.

Opponents of the marriage strategy make a legitimate point—this struggle has largely taken over the gay right movement—but most of the authors in the book see marriage equality as a powerful engine for wider advances in GLBT rights over the past decade, and even as a radical demand in itself. Thus, for example, Regina Sewell concludes the following in "Unequal Marriage": "If we want to truly achieve equality, we have to heal the scars and change the culture that causes them. Ironically, one of the most powerful ways we can do this is by getting married. Getting married is the new coming out. It challenges us to face our scars, pushes those close to us to explore their homophobic attitudes, and normalizes our relationship to the world at large."

Whether gay or straight, people's sense of identity, the quality and substance of their relationships, their reasons for getting married, are as many and varied as the number of people so engaged. Sexual orientation only adds another element to the mix. This unusually entertaining and well-written collection of essays offers a wide range of 21st-century perspectives on a cluster of age-old human problems.

Dale Boyer is a writer living and working in Chicago.

The Truman Show

Jeff Solomon

Truman Capote: A Literary Life at the Movies
by Tison Pugh
Bantam Books. 497 pages, $28.95

Truman Capote attained the kind of fame associated with a movie star or television personality rather than a writer. His familiar TV persona was that of an effeminate, outrageous, and rather bitchy gay man. His ability to achieve such notoriety against the homophobic backdrop of the 1960s and '70s makes him an important figure in modern gay history, apart from his literary merit. Capote has recently received a mini-revival as a subject of scholarly interest.

The great virtue of *Truman Capote: A Literary Life at the Movies* is its comprehensiveness. Pugh, a medievalist who also writes on film, details the many cinematic and televised adaptations of Capote's novels and short stories, several of which have been filmed two or three times. Pugh surveys Capote's

career as a screenwriter, an actor, and as a theatrical and cinematic character both in film and on television. The archival work on Capote's unproduced teleplays is especially interesting and unexpected. Anyone seeking a handy guide to *Uncle Sam's Hard Luck Hotel*, Capote's unproduced 1973 teleplay for an NBC series about a halfway house for parolees, need look no further.

Pugh is more interested in cataloguing Capote's career than in analyzing its contents. For instance, he records Capote's thoughts on his own and others' fame and notes the unusual prominence of his subject's gay persona, but he doesn't ask how this celebrity came about, much less what it meant to his public. In general, his critical apparatus is defined by noticing how queerness creeps into adaptations of Capote's work, despite considerable censorship. Much of this is fascinating, especially in unusual cases such as the adaptation of Capote's campy, gruesome story "Children on Their Birthdays" into a Christian family film. Pugh also makes some useful observations about Capote's sustained interest in pre-adolescent gay characters.

Too often, however, Pugh's research raises questions and leaves them unanswered. For example, he devotes a whole chapter to Capote's failed attempt to make Lee Bouvier Radziwill into a movie star by turning the classic 1944 noir film *Laura* into a TV movie in the late '60s. Radziwill was the sister of Jackie Kennedy and the wife of a Polish prince, and Capote seems to have thought that her glamour was sufficient to compensate for her lack of talent. But why was he so invested in her career as a performer? More broadly, why was he so invested in the rich, upper-class women he called his "swans"? And why choose *Laura*, a mystery about a woman who's the subject of an æsthete's murderous obsession, a man who, if not gay, is certainly not straight? Pugh unearths fascinating details, but I kept waiting for him to make some sense of it all.

When he does offer some analysis, a different kind of question arises. For example, he goes to great lengths to demonstrate the inadequacy of Capote's script for the 1974 film of *The Great Gatsby*, which was rejected in favor of one by Francis Ford Coppola. But the interesting question is why Capote proved unequal to this assignment. He was considered to be a reliable, hard worker by the studios, and Pugh documents the success of his screenplays for *Beat the Devil*, *Indiscretions of an American Wife,* and especially *The Innocents*. So what happened?

Such questions do not detract from Pugh's achievement in unearthing a bounty of archival material, much of it ephemeral. Movies and television were not the most important of Capote's concerns, but they were certainly more important than is commonly recognized. Pugh offers scholars a great gift by providing what he calls a "Cinema Capoteana," a bibliography of all of his screenplays and all adaptations of his work.

Jeff Solomon is a lecturer at the University of Southern California. His book Fabulous Potency: Truman Capote and Gertrude Stein *will be published next year.*

ARTIST'S PROFILE

Jamie Brickhouse Remembers Mama

COURT STROUD

"YOU A BITCH OR WHORE?" asks Jamie Brickhouse with a mischievous grin from across the lacquered coffee table in his trendy Chelsea flat in New York City. With his copper hair, black sweater, purple shirt, and indigo plaid trousers, it's clear the author of the new book Dangerous When Wet *(St. Martin's Press) is accustomed to colorful accents, both on and off the page. As he pours from the silver teapot, curlicues of steam spill out of two china cups, each rimmed with broad bands of emerald and emblazoned with campy epithets. With his back against a velour throw, a zebra-patterned pillow under one arm, and his tabby Lotte Lenya at his side, we begin our interview about the native Texan's first book, a campy yet touching memoir about his struggles with the bottle, his sexuality, and his mother, Mama Jean.*

Court Stroud: Was it difficult for you to write so candidly about the three great loves of your life: booze, sex, and your mother?

Jamie Brickhouse: Actually, I don't love booze anymore. But my mother—I think about her every day. Was it hard? Sure, it's revealing my own bad behavior. I had to come to terms with whether I was going to tell everything. With the alcohol side of things, I wasn't so nervous. I had been sober for some time so that wasn't such a hurdle. Talking about my mother, though? For a while, I felt I might be betraying her.

CS: Was there any pushback from family members?
JB: No, there wasn't. My family was very supportive about the book. My father gave me carte blanche. But I had to overcome my fear that I might betray her by writing about our relationship or her behavior. The last hurdle was revealing that I'm HIV-positive, because I was still in the closet about that.

CS: In the book, you mention your mother died not knowing your status.
JB: I never told her because I wanted to protect her. I was also, quite frankly, afraid that she'd say: "Goddammit! I told you so! I knew this would happen to you!" However, even if she'd had that reaction at first, she would've gotten over it.

CS: You struggled about whether to put your HIV status in the book?
JB: I had shame about it. I don't, for the most part, now. Although I didn't write this book as a form of therapy, it's helped me come to terms with being HIV-positive. It's a disease, a condition, like any other. I decided, in the end, it's crucial as a consequence of my drinking.

CS: If you didn't write the book as a form of therapy, why did you write *Dangerous When Wet*?
JB: Because I wanted to be a writer. I wrote from the time I was young. I wrote in high school. I wrote in college. I've always wanted to express myself artistically—and this was a story I had to tell. I started writing it in a workshop a year after my mother died knowing that I wanted to tell this story. In other words, I had the fire in me to write this because I had to.

CS: Your mother tells you to be a writer during your freshman year of college. Why

did you wait so long to write your first book?
JB: I did do some early writing. When I came to New York, I wanted to work for magazines, got into book publishing instead, did some freelancing for a while. Then the drinking took over. I was a functioning alcoholic for a long time, so I kept my job and I kept moving up in the publishing world. I even made the decision that I didn't have time for any other artistic endeavor because I was busy working and out living my life. I didn't say, "out drinking"; it was "out living my life."

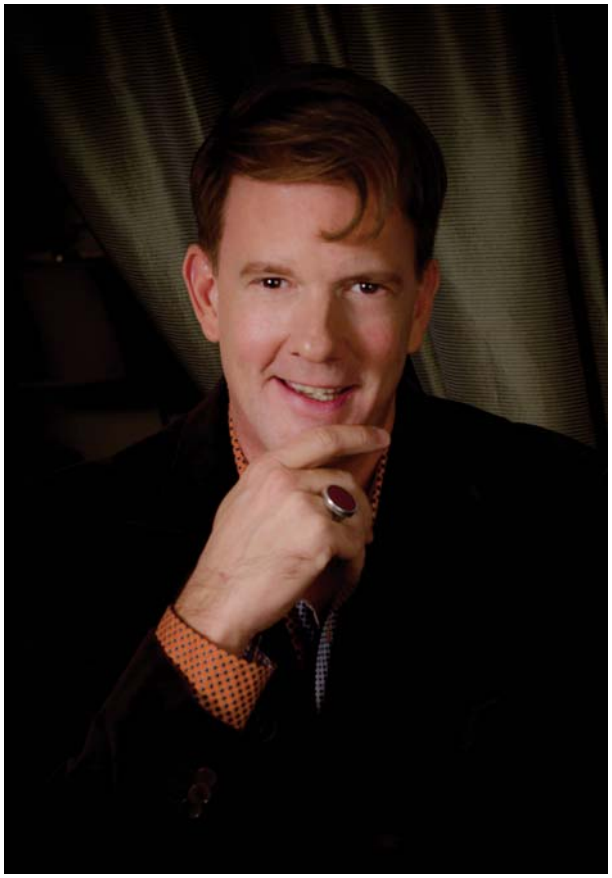
CS: At the age of five, you watched Peggy Lee sing "Is That All There Is*?"* on TV and it became your song. Why the instant attraction?
JB: She was unlike anything I'd ever seen before on television. She was this large, ghostly, sparkly, freaky image in a fog of lights and white chiffon. Her appearance drew me in. Then, the song itself is this great story. I related immediately to the melancholy of it and to the acceptance of disappointment. If crap comes your way in life, let's just have a party and keep moving.

CS: Now that you're sober, do you still have the desire to "break out the booze and have a ball"?
JB: I still like to have a good time. But I don't throw myself into a party, i.e. drinking, to get over life's disappointments. These days, for the most part, I face them head on. Some alcoholics say that from the beginning they drank to avoid reality, but I started drinking because I like to have fun and drinking got me there faster.

CS: My heart went out to you several times when you related how you'd go out for a drink after work and then you'd realize the sun was dawning on the next workday. This account must have been painful to write.
JB: I'm glad you said it was painful to read, because then I've done my job of telling the story, which was painful to live. The guilt and shame were the worst part—worse than the physical hangovers, worse than the money spent and the money lost. Worse than any of it was the self-loathing that it caused.

CS: You're unflinchingly honest in your storytelling. When you describe how the anal warts you picked up while still in high school looked like "a cauliflower bouquet," I wanted to laugh but was so horrified that a fifteen-year-old had to go through such embarrassment. Have you overcome your shame?
JB: I have. As for the STDs, I never had crabs and never had the clap, but I had anal warts and scabies and HIV. So when I do STDs, I go the full gallop.

CS: Are you always as transparent as you are in the book?
JB: If it makes for a good joke, I've never had problems making jokes at my own expense. But no, I was not always that transparent. That comes from being sober, because part of how you stay sober is by being unflinchingly honest—not necessarily with the public but with yourself and with one other person.



CS: While you were at home, your mother warns you that you have a predisposition to alcoholism due to family history.
JB: It was something I ignored because I thought she was a bit of a wet blanket when it came to drinking. She was always on my father's case about his drinking—and I thought unfairly so. Then, when I saw other people with drinking problems crash and fall, I thought I'd figure it out before I became one of those people. I even read booze memoirs long before I thought I had a problem or considered getting sober. I was riveted and thought, "Oh my god! I can't believe that," never once thinking that might be me.

CS: Speaking of booze memoirs, there's almost a sub-genre of gay men writing about addictions: *Portrait of an Addict as a Young Man*, by Bill Clegg; *Dry*, by Augusten Burroughs; Ron Nyswaner's *Blue Days, Black Nights,* to name a few. What makes your story different?
JB: Well, it's my story, for one thing. We all have our different stories. I tell it through the prism of my relationship with my mother. When I started, I had to decide, am I going to write a book about my mother, or am I going to write a book about my alcoholism? I thought about it, but not for too long. They're integrated because she was, in a way, my conscience throughout.

CS: You ask yourself throughout the book, "W.W.M.J.T."? ("What Would Mama Jean Think?")
JB: Exactly. For a long time, it pissed me off—and then it worked for me.

CS: What pissed you off?
JB: That I couldn't get her out of my head. That no matter how far I traveled, no matter how much I drank, even when she wasn't there—she was *there*. At one point fairly early in our relationship, my husband Michael and I had a terrible fight in Zurich. It was pretty awful. He was hurt and went for the jugular saying, "What would your mother think?" I said, "Don't bring her into this!" but she was always there.

But it worked for me in the end. Because when I was struggling to stay sober—after I had gone to a rehab that Mama Jean paid for—and I had been relapsing, she went into decline due to dementia. I was seven months sober when I saw her in the hospital. I didn't even know if she knew who I was. As I turned to leave her, she grabbed my arm in a vise grip. I turned around and she was staring me down. She was Mama Jean, when that whole visit she had not been herself. All of sudden she said, "You've been drinking." "No, I haven't." I wondered how could she know I'd been relapsing. She said, "Don't lie to me." I said, "I'm not." She said, "Okay, promise me." "I promise." That moment I told myself, "Listen, if you can't stay sober for yourself, do it for her." I haven't had a drink since.

Court Stroud works in Spanish-language television in New York City.

Cultural Calendar

Readers are invited to submit items at no charge. Must have relevance to a national (US) readership. E-mail to: HGLR@aol.com. Be sure to allow at least a month's lead time for any listing.

Festivals and Events

Film Festivals

Seattle Translations: Transgender Film Festival May 7–10.

Portland, OR Queer Documentary Film Festival May 14–17.

San Diego FilmOut LGBT Film Festival May 29–31.

Toronto Inside Out LGBT Film and Video Festival May 21–31.

Hartford, CT Out Film Festival May 29–June 6.

Events

Queers & Comics Conf. will be held at CLAGS in NYC, May 7-8. Celebrate and explore queer cartoonists and their work. For info, visit: www.clags.org/queers-comics

Lambda Literary Awards 25th annual ceremony will be held in New York City, at Cooper Union, on the evening of June 1.

Netroots Nation Conf. Practical training for activists in a range of issues, including gay rights. In Phoenix, AZ, July 16–19. Visit: www.netrootsfoundation.org

OutWrite Book Fair in Washington, DC happens July 30–Aug. 1. (See ad at right.)

NLGJA Media Summit National Lesbian & Gay Journalists Assn. will convene in San Francisco, Sept. 3–6. Visit: www.nlgja.org

LGBT Leaders 2015 Int'l leadership conf. of the G&L Victory Institute will be held in Las Vegas, Nov. 19–22. Focus is on electing GLBT people to public office. Visit: www.VictoryInstitute.org.

Feature Films

52 Tuesdays (directed by Sophie Hyde). Australian film traces a year of Tuesday afternoons in the life of 16-year-old Billie, whose mother has begun gender transition.

The Cult of JT Leroy (Marjorie Sturm). Documentary explores the scandal following the discovery of JT Leroy's "memoirs" were actually the creation of female writer Laura Albert.

Drown (Dean Francis). Australian drama (based on a hit play) focuses on two lifeguards whose confused feelings toward each other—and about being gay—set off a complicated chain of events.

Larry Kramer in Love and Anger (Jean Carlomusto). HBO documentary is a "warts and all" treatment of the life and times of the activist, novelist, and playwright.

Nasty Baby (Sebastián Silva). Drama about a gay couple that's trying to have a baby with the help of their best friend (Kristen Wiig).

The Remake (Lynne Alana Delaney, Timothy Delaney). Comedy about two actors who worked together years ago—and had an off-screen romance—now reunited for a remake of their first film.

Seed Money (Michael Stabile). Documentary tells the story of Chuck Holmes, a San Francisco pornographer turned philanthropist and booster of gay groups that later turned against him.

Tab Hunter Confidential (Jeffrey Schwarz). Documentary about the 1950s matinee idol, whose status as a teen idol and straight stud belied his secret life as a gay man.

Tiger Orange (Wade Gasque). Drama traces the California reunion of two estranged brothers, both gay, one a closeted introvert, the other an out and outgoing hunk.

Welcome To This House (Barbara Hammer). Documentary about poet Elizabeth Bishop visits the homes in which she resided, wrote poetry, and conducted love affairs with various women.

Theater / Dance

Out Weekend at Jacob's Pillow The Berkshires dance festival welcomes GLBT people all summer long, esp. during Out Weekend, July 3–5 this year. Visit www.jacobspillow.org.

Come Back Again So I Can Say Goodbye Labyrinth Dance Theater's dramatic show at the Alvin Ailey Theater in NYC on June 8. Benefit will spotlight artists many artists lost to AIDS.

Naked Boys Singing The musical revue is back Off Broadway, featuring eight naked dudes singing 15 original songs in "New York's most outrageous musical comedy." At the Kirk Theatre.

See Dance Differently Weekend-long festival in the Fire Island Pines features top choreographers from Broadway to ballet. Produced by Dancers Responding to AIDS. Visit: www.dradance.org.

Sex Tips for a Straight Woman from a Gay Man Off-Broadway play about a play about the title topic. At the 777 Theatre.

Thoroughly Muslim Millie, a musical parody by Ryan Landry and the Gold Dust Orphans, will play all summer in Provincetown.

Art Exhibitions

I Am: A Trans Fourteen transgender artists from around the US present their work in a range of visual media. At the Waterloo Arts Gallery, Cleveland, thru May 25. Go to: www.waterlooarts.org.

Kehinde Wiley: A New Republic Portraits of African-American individuals raise questions about race & gender. At the Brooklyn Museum now thru May 24. Visit: www.brooklynmuseum.org.

Storyteller: The Photographs of Duane Michals Retrospective features 200+ of the artist's works at the Peabody Essex Museum in Salem, MA, thru June 21. (See p. 50.) Visit: www.pem.org.

Can She Hear You! Installations by Martín Gutierrez explore modern relationships and gender roles. Thru May 9 at the Ryan Lee Gallery, New York. Visit: www.ryanleegallery.com.

Changing Views: Queering U.S. Landscapes At Univ. of Arizona Museum of Art, Tucson, thru August. Visit: www.lgbt.arizona.edu.

Call for Submissions

Upcoming Issues of *The GLR*

The Gay & Lesbian Review accepts unsolicited manuscripts and proposals on all GLBT-related topics. Especially sought are proposals on the following themes for issues in development:

- New York, NY: America's First City in GLBT history & culture
- The Dance: The GLBT influence from classical to contemporary
- Beyond Marriage Equality: What's next for the movement?

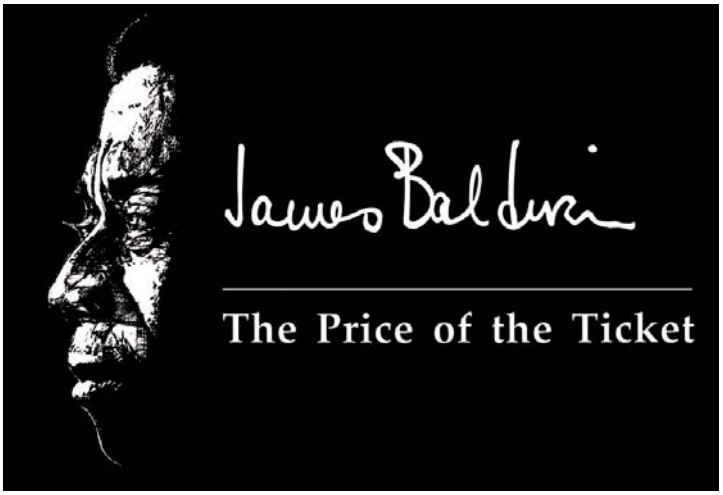
Please e-mail your proposal to the Editor at ***HGLR@aol.com****.*

James Baldwin Comes Alive in Film Classic

GORDON THOMPSON

JAMES BALDWIN came alive as never before in Karen Thorsen's documentary *James Baldwin: The Price Of The Ticket*, first released in 1990 and rereleased on its 25th anniversary in a newly restored print. Doubly enhanced by the collaboration of the late Maya Angelou, who provided live readings of Baldwin's work and acted as scholar–advisor for the original film, this refurbished and brightened version of the documentary fleshes out Baldwin's tactile characteristics in a manner rarely captured by any of his literary biographers. Here his fey appearance—gay affect, clipped vocal mannerisms, and mincing steps—warms the heart.

A voiceover of Baldwin's social and political wisdom accompanies the opening credits that lead directly to scenes from Baldwin's funeral service at St. John the Divine in Morningside Heights, beside Columbia University. The cathedral's magnificent, towering ceiling competes with large African drums set at the foot of the altar sending majestic percussive proclamations echoing off the walls. This sublime dissonance is enhanced by the clergy in high liturgical garb moving between the celebrants toward the African-attired percussionists. The celebratory though subdued mood of the congregation also contrasted with the vision of Baldwin's mother, inconsolably contorted though held in check by grieving relatives.



Thorsen whisks us away from this extraordinary cacophony associated with his death back to Baldwin's early years. With the assistance of historical footage interspersed with enactments and commentary from then living writers, the film touches down on Baldwin's birthplace in Harlem on Park Avenue, offering a vision of his intimidating father and the 135th Street library, where he assiduously taught himself world literature. We learn again that he began to write creatively from at least the age of eight, that P.S. 24 was his grammar school, and Central Holiness Church of Harlem his spiritual foundation.

While I enjoyed these memories, the film also revealed aspects of Baldwin's body to which I had paid very little attention. Though I had met him once, I did not recall how short he was: a small, lower body topped by a boyish chest and shoulders upon which rested a formidable head. His wide, otherwise notable nose is overshadowed by his inescapably wide, bulging eyes. The well-recognized wrinkles of his forehead are shown to deepen over time, producing those ever-present, intensely etched horizontal furrows that, in turn, intersect with increasingly pronounced vertical creases that plunge down to just above the bridge of his nose. These features speak to his state of deep contemplation that seemed almost perpetual. Overall, I was taken by Baldwin's lithe physicality as juxtaposed against his sharp jeremiads.

Suddenly, a familiar African-American trope slices the air as Baldwin reveals that once a waitress refused to serve him, explicitly attributing her decision to his color, thus triggering a crisis in his early psychic life. The full impact of Jim Crow appears to have entered his consciousness at that moment, rocking his basic sense of self. The many similar slights that would follow in the wake of this epiphany Baldwin would later, during his time in France and Turkey, "vomit up."

From Paris to Algiers, to Turkey, and to the south of France, viewers witness the great drinker and smoker, indeed the iconic wielder of cigarettes: here Bette Davis had nothing on Baldwin. Scenes of international locales divert us as Baldwin makes his way from place to place, affording spectators a view of his positions on a range of topics—his compassion for the French Algerian underclass and his appreciation of traditional Turkish culture, for example. Clearly, Baldwin's reasons for travel were not those of a tourist; unfamiliar places helped him to see himself more clearly.

The film focuses on a number of his novels, such as *Giovanni's Room, Go Tell It on the Mountain, Another Country,* and *If Beale Street Could Talk*, along with his play *Blues for Mister Charlie*. Baldwin may have sharpened his craft prior to writing these powerful books while working as a book reviewer. He indicates that most of the volumes he reviewed were about race relations—scholarship, one might say, that allowed him to explore such issues more broadly than he otherwise might have even while honing his writing skills.

The choice of Maya Angelou to narrate portions of Baldwin's works—her mellifluent tones heard throughout—ratchets up the historical significance of this film immensely. Also featured is writer and poet Amiri Baraka, who offers searing political and social commentary and a summation of Baldwin's life and politics. We're reminded of the enormous impact that the assassinations of Martin Luther King, Jr., Medgar Evers, Robert Kennedy, and Malcolm X had on Baldwin's artistic sensibility. In light of these volatile issues and events, Baldwin challenged, not necessarily self-avowed racists, but liberal Americans who were blind to their paternalism and ignorance in the face of black oppression. To paraphrase one commentator, Baldwin was "telling white America what it means to be black." The film reveals that Baldwin remained tuned in to his need to shine a light on black life and assist those of good faith with an interest in eradicating racial oppression.

I cannot recall another documentary on a black writer that contained such breadth and resonance. Scenes of Baldwin asleep, in his underwear, walking down the street, talking to children, visiting bars, etc.—his resplendent soul always down-to-earth—were lovingly and delicately recorded in this film. A deeply humble man, he never strove for anything that would take him above the dignity of his mother, despite his celebrity status. For this reason, one might wonder at the pomp and circumstance at the Cathedral of St. John the Divine in celebration of his passing. He was a man of the people, working in the vineyard to speak the truth as he knew it.

Gordon Thompson is professor of English and African American Studies at City College of New York.

Michals *Continued from page 50*

Ellenzweig's eye, prompting him to wonder in that first encounter: "Who was this photographer who placed before my eyes a figure so luscious and seductive? How did he, this Duane Michals, know my secret?" It is this kind of provocative intimacy, this secret of visual expression, that has made Michals' work so compelling within late 20th-century gay imagery.

In such important works as *Homage To Cavafy* (1978), *The Nature of Desire* (1986), *Narcissus* (1986), and *Salute, Walt Whitman* (1996), Michals merged the personal with the historical and the mythical through a visual language of desire that appears always just out of reach. Unlike the younger generation of gay-identified photographers working in the late 1970s and '80s for whom homoerotic desire was their explicit subject (notably Robert Mapplethorpe), Michals offered, in Ellenzweig's words, "indirection, ambiguity, metaphor" as ways to engage with "same-sex amity, physical adoration, and romantic longing in images that are staged to mysterious, poetic effect." In some sense it is the *idea* of desire, with its visual and poetic uncertainties, rather than its actuality that motivates Michals in such works.

What is clear throughout the essays and interviews is how Michals saw his place in 20th-century photography, which was precisely through his resistance to its demands. When *The New York Times* featured Michals in an interview just before the exhibition at the Carnegie Museum opened, they titled the piece "Documents of a Contrarian." This title underscored not only the artist's direct and sometimes flat criticisms of art world pretensions (most acutely demonstrated in his visual satire of artists such as Cindy Sherman and Andreas Gursky in his 2006 *Foto Follies: How Photography Lost Its Virginity on the Way to the Bank*), but also suggested the ways in which he taught himself (and others) the freedom to push at the boundaries of photographic art.

Max Kozloff, in his essay on Michals' most recent work of painting brightly-colored modernist and surrealist designs on 19th-century tintypes, thinks they evoke a collage-like discontinuity between past and present in which the earlier image becomes a disembodied portrait, reconfigured in the present under Michals' brushstrokes. As Kozloff writes, photography for Michals is "a ghostly medium, since it transcribes appearances but lacks substance, forever disallowing our touch." We experience this in so many of his images that play with shadows and ghostly figures, images haunted by a presence seen and unseen.

In a series from the 1970s titled *Chance Meeting*, we watch the alleyway encounter of two men in business suits, their bodies passing in silence. In the first few images, we encounter the scene from just behind one man's shoulder, looking down the alley as the other approaches in the distance. The photographs move like a series of film stills as the two men encounter each other, exchange glances, and turn backwards to look as the space between them grows. The final image presents just the one man, staring back at us down the length of the alley. Throughout the sequence only their glances suggest the potential sexual encounter that never materializes as the two men float away like fleeting apparitions.

What this collection does best is to illuminate how Michals' creative, genre-crossing work has influenced the history of late 20th-century photography. Aaron Schuman's personal and engaging essay, "Lessons Learned: Three Encounters with Duane Michals," sees in the early work of the 1960s and early '70s a prescient vision of choreographed and narrative photography that later became vital to the genre's place in contemporary art. Shuman correctly notes that Michals has spent the last half-century blurring the boundaries between "photography and art, between fiction and reality, between the personal and the universal, and between artwork and the artists." But more importantly, he has "consistently redefined such boundaries in terms of his own life and his own needs, and has even pushed past such boundaries, repeatedly and resolutely exploring territories well beyond the established frontiers of photography itself."

Duane Michals, Chance Meeting, *1973*

Slipping Glimpse of the Narrative Eye

JAMES POLCHIN

Storyteller: The Photographs of Duane Michals

Carnegie Museum of Art, Pittsburgh
Nov. 1, 2014 to Feb. 16, 2015

Peabody Essex Museum, Essex, Massachusetts
March 7 to June 21, 2015

Storyteller: The Photographs of Duane Michals

Edited by Linda Benedict-Jones
Prestel. 240 pages, $75.

"A CAMERA IS LIKE a typewriter, in the sense in which you can use the machine to write a love letter, a book, or a business memo," the photographer Duane Michals said in a 2001 interview with Italian critic Enrica Viganò, which is reproduced in *Storyteller: The Photographs of Duane Michals*. He added that some photographers use a camera "simply to document reality: a face you pass on the street, a car accident. I think the camera can also be used as a vehicle of the imagination." Produced as the catalog for a retrospective exhibition at the Carnegie Museum of Art in Pittsburgh earlier this year and currently the Peabody Essex Museum in Massachusetts, *Storyteller* presents critical essays, early and recent interviews with the artist, and reproductions of some of his more important series.

Michals has used the camera as such a vehicle for over fifty years, producing a still-growing portfolio of work that has often challenged our notions of what photography should look like in both form and subject matter. When he started out taking photographs in the 1960s, he had little interest in the kind

Duane Michals, Narcissus *(one in a series), 1986*

of Cartier-Bresson "decisive moment realism" that was the genre's dominant æsthetic. Instead, he explored photography's creative and invented potential using double and long exposures, creating narrative sequences made up of images, often adding lyrical captions in his own handwriting—which, he once said, turned the mechanical form of the photograph into a unique and personal work.

James Polchin teaches writing at New York University and is a frequent contributor to this magazine.

These elements combine to produce thoughtful and deeply intimate images. To encounter a Michals photograph is to be caught somewhere between a poet's concern for language and detail, a photographer's eye for the quotidian, and a surrealist's use of juxtaposition and illusion. (He has had a long-standing fascination with Belgian painter René Magritte and did several portraits of the artist and his wife in the 1970s.) He has explored this unique alchemy over the years, exhibiting in solo and group shows in the U.S. and abroad and publishing over twenty photo books. But his place in the art world has often been a mixed one: critics have described his work as everything from sentimental to powerfully inventive.

Born in 1932, Michals was raised in a working-class neighborhood outside of Pittsburgh. His father was a steelworker and his mother worked as a live-in domestic servant, leaving Michals to be raised by his Slovak immigrant grandparents, who spoke little English. His upbringing was quite similar to that of his contemporary, Andy Warhol, who also grew up in an immigrant, working-class Slovak family in Pittsburgh. Both men would ultimately leave home to study art and would eventually land in New York, where they would start their creative careers in commercial art. But Warhol's aloof and ironic stance in both his public persona and his art—as well as his meteoric rise to celebrity status—contrasts sharply with Michals' expressive sincerity, emotional acuity, and oftentimes comic play in his art. "He has never been a photographer's photographer," writes Linda Benedict-Jones, the exhibition curator and chief writer for this collection, in her introductory essay. She adds that despite this marginal position among his peers, "he has carved a place for himself in contemporary art history and left an indelible mark on all kinds of people who trade in human communication and visual expression."

As the essays in this collection show, it is Michals' intimacy of ideas and emotions that define his work and its appeal. Allen Ellenzweig's essay, "Wounded by Beauty," begins with an early encounter with Michals' *Paradise Regained*, a 1968 series of images that captures a young man and woman staring back at us as they sit in a sparse apartment, dressed in business attire. As the series progresses, the furniture is replaced by an increasingly dense forest of plants, and the man and woman lose layers of clothing, "gradually reveal[ing] themselves in the glory of their nakedness and sinless innocence." But it is the seductive image of Adam, who sits closest to the camera, muscled and angelic, that attracted

Continued on page 49

Welcome to Full Access

You get a lot more than a bimonthly magazine when you subscribe...

You also get total access to the *GLR* Website at **www.GLReview.com**.

The site has been fully redesigned and now offers a wealth of free content — exclusively to *GLR* subscribers. Among other benefits, you get:

- Full access to the current issue;
- Complete access to the *GLR* Archive, which includes all issues back to 2004;
- New content — not in the paper magazine — on the most interesting events of the day.

Get to Know the *GLR*'s Relaunched Website —

As a subscriber, you get full access to the entire website, which includes the archive of past issues back to 2004. Use the form below or, better yet, do it at the site and set up an account. **Do it today and get a FREE ISSUE for each year that you subscribe!**

Scan the QRC to reach *The GLR*'s subscription page.

The Gay & Lesbian Review/WORLDWIDE

A bimonthly journal of history, culture, & politics

❍ **I'm joining the conversation!** Please enter my subscription for:

__ 1 year at $23. Over 45% off the newsstand rate! (Canada: $33. Overseas: $43.)

__ 2 years at $39. Over 53% off the newsstand rate! (Canada: $59. Overseas: $79.)

Name _____

Address _____

City, state, zip _____

Free Issue for each year that you subscribe!

❍ **Check enclosed to:**
G&LR
PO Box 16477
N. Hollywood, CA

❍ **Credit card** ___ Visa ___ MasterCard ___ Amex

No.: _____-_____-_____-_____

Exp.: _____/_____ Signed: _____

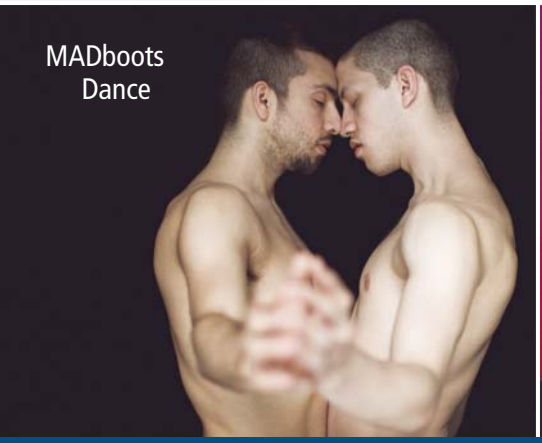
WWW.GLREVIEW.ORG

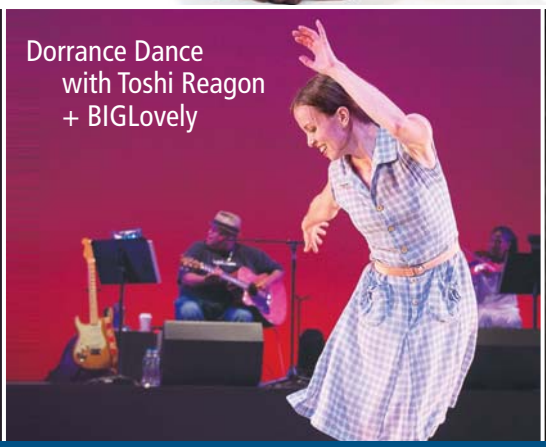
JACOB'S PILLOW
DANCE
FESTIVAL 2015

June 20–August 30

"the dance center of the nation"

-The New York Times





350+ free and ticketed events | performances by dance companies from around the world
free performances, talks, and exhibits | dining and shopping | located in beautiful Western Massachusetts

WEEKEND OUT | JULY 3–5
Sponsored by *The Gay & Lesbian Review*

413.243.0745 | jacobspillow.org

Photos Nir Arielli, Ken Browar & Deborah Ory of NYC Dance Project, Christopher Duggan, and Hibbard Nash Photography.