

GLBTF NEWSLETTER

A PUBLICATION OF THE GAY, LESBIAN, BISEXUAL TRANSGENDERED ROUND TABLE
OF THE AMERICAN LIBRARY ASSOCIATION

From the Editor:

This edition contains information about Midwinter Conference, updates from our co-chairs. Also enclosed here is a flyer regarding the times of the GLBTRT meetings during ALA Midwinter in San Antonio in January 2000. As this went to print, meeting locations were not yet available. Please look for them in your conference program.

A hearty welcome to baby born to Shari Clifton and her partner. Many blessing to your family! We hope to see you in San Antonio!

Please note that the next edition of the newsletter you receive will be named the GLBTRT Newsletter. Please renew your subscription and add a little donation if you can the GLBTRT itself. Our new round table status also makes us more dependent on our members for financial support. See you at conference!

Finally, I would like your input regarding putting the newsletter in electronic format. Would it be more useful for you than the current print copy? Would you hate it? Love it? Be for this change if it would allow our Round Table to do other things with our money? Please email me at cal.zunt@cpl.org with your opinion on this matter.

-M. Callaghan "Cal" Zunt
Newsletter Editor

Book Award Committee

The GLBT-RT Book Award Committee is hard at work reviewing titles for the 1999 Book Award. Nominations for this year's award closed on November 30 (eligibility requires that the title be published between then and late fall of the previous year.) At the time this article is being written, we have 12 literature and 16 non-fiction titles (two winners to be chosen, one from each group). There is an equal number of titles from large publishers, academic presses, and small independent houses. Judging from previous years, we expect more nominations to be made as the November 30 deadline approaches.

Because of the increasing numbers of glbt titles being published compared to previous years, committee members concentrate their reading in assigned categories of interest and expertise. Book reviews from many sources are collected and made available for committee perusal, and regular and increasingly frequent discussions occur online via our Book Award Committee listserv. As our deliberations proceed and various stages of voting occur, members are encouraged to read all books and must be thoroughly familiar with those titles reaching our finalist lists. Announcement of the outstanding glbtf titles for 1999 will occur at ALA Mid-Winter in San Antonio, following an always spirited and oftentimes lengthy committee meeting.

The 1999 GLBT-RT Book Award Committee has 14 members, eight women and eight men, from a variety of libraries around the country (five public, six academic, and three special).

We are:

John Bradford, Tempe (AZ) Public Library Ellen Bosman, Indiana University Northwest Jane Cothron, Lincoln County (OR) Library District David Garnes, Chair, University of Connecticut Sarah Holmes, Watertown (MA) Free Public Library Alison Hopkins, Queens Borough (NY) Public Library Gary McMillan, Howard University (DC) John Mitchell, Library of Congress (DC) ,Anne Moore, Vice-Chair/Chair-Elect, University of Oklahoma Laura Quilter, Exploratorium (San Francisco, CA) Victor Schill, Harris County (TX) Public Library Steve Stratton, Virginia Commonwealth University Ed Teague, University of Florida Karen Whittlesey American Theological Library Assoc. (IL)

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FROM THE CO-CHAIRS

Roland Hansen, Male Co-Chair

The planning wheels are turning for both Midwinter and Annual Conferences. The Midwinter schedule appears elsewhere in this issue. Be sure to check the conference program for changes after you register. The Social will be held on Saturday, instead of Sunday. Harper-Collins has generously donated \$500.00 towards the cost of the social. This is great news. Be sure to stop by the Harper-Collins exhibit booth and show your appreciation. Since we are still in need of funds, we will again ask for \$5.00 donation at the door. Victor Schill is coordinating this bash, and I'm sure he could use some extra help. Contact him if you are able to volunteer.

The 30th Anniversary celebration in Chicago 2000 is shaping up. Unfortunately, we were not able to negotiate with the Cultural Center Management, so we will have the event at a conference hotel. The event will be Monday night July 10th from 6pm to 10pm. As of this writing ticket prices will be \$60.00 in advance, \$70.00 on site. This includes sit-down dinner and the presentation of the Book Awards. Tentatively we will have Nancy Garden as one of our keynote speakers. Advance purchase information will be included with your advanced registration information coming from ALA. Volunteers are still needed for various duties, especially on the local level. Please contact me if you are interested in getting involved. Many members are interested in having a social before the Read-A-Loud on Sunday, and we need coordinators for both of these events.

The Round Table is also co-sponsoring a pre-conference titled "Gay Teens in the 21st Century: Access for the Future". Ann Symons has been the organizing force behind this timely and enticing event. It will be a full day conference on Friday, July 7, 2000. Registration costs will include lunch. The pre-conference is being partially funded by the Margaret Edwards Trust. I would like to encourage all Round Table members to consider attending. See you in San Antonio.

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Election Committee Seeks Candidates

The RT Elections Committee will be hosting a Candidates Forum for RT members running for ALA Council and SRRT Action Council. Any RT member running for those offices who would like to be included in the Candidates Forum should contact the Elections Committee so we can place them on the program. It is especially important that members running for ALA Council notify us, as we will be endorsing two candidates for Council.

Please contact: Steve Russo
Chair of the Elections Committee, at stevrus@aol.com or at 603 432 6140 (fax: 603 432 6128).

Shari Clifton, Female Co-Chair

I'd like to begin this column by offering my thanks to Roland for his handling of all things GLBTRT related during my maternity leave (including all the Midwinter forms)! Thanks too, for the numerous messages of congratulations I received after Lettie's birth. I am back at work now and happy to report that motherhood is everything I imagined it would be and more; my partner and I are truly having the times of our lives!

There is exciting news for the GLBTRT as well. Through the efforts of ALA's Immediate Past President, Ann Symons, the GLBTRT will be cosponsoring a preconference at Annual in Chicago entitled "Gay Teens in the 21st Century: Access for the Future - An Intellectual Freedom Leadership Institute for Librarians Working With Young Adults". Substantial funding in support of this event has been secured from the Margaret Edwards Trust through a proposal submitted by Ann. Roland and myself will be involved in the planning and will be calling upon many of you to help. In addition to the obvious benefit of providing content that librarians everywhere are in need of this preconference is a wonderful debut for the GLBTRT.

As always, don't hesitate to drop me a note, virtual or otherwise, if you have questions or comments. I'm looking forward to seeing all of you in San Antonio!

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About GLBTF Newsletter

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Subscription Address: Gay, Lesbian, Bisexual Task Force, OLOS, American Library Association, 50 E. Huron St., Chicago, IL 60611.

Letters to the editor, correspondence to the above address care of:

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M. Callaghan "Cal" Zunt
or via email at: cal.zunt@cpl.org

Book Reviews

Reviews are a regular feature of the GLBTF Newsletter. If you would like to be a reviewer or receive reviewing guidelines, please contact:

Barbara R. Stevens
GLBTF Book Review Editor
Email: stevenbr@uwec.edu
715-836-2522 or Fax 715-836-2902

Opposite Sex Gay Men on Lesbians, Lesbians on Gay Men .
Edited by Sara Miles and Eric Rofes.

The selections in this anthology look at gay, lesbian, bisexual, and transgendered sexuality from a scholarly perspective. What makes Opposite Sex unique is that gay men write many of the pieces about lesbian sexuality or lesbians about gay male sexuality. The editors describe the anthology as, "draw(ing) on the work of scholars and academics, artists, historians, and journalists, as well as the lesbian and gay activists whose practices create the ground for theory."

Topics include lesbian personals, gay male bears, cross-gender revulsion, and transgenders who change sexual identity. The individual selections take a variety of forms: essays, photographs, group discussions, and visual art with poetry. The obvious audience for Opposite Sex is the academic world because of the intellectual jargon. This is unfortunate since the subjects of most of the articles would generate much needed discussions around sexuality in the LGBT community.

The article by Rofes about cross-gender revulsion entitled, "The Ick Factor" is an interesting theory about why many gay men have trouble working with and supporting lesbians. As a non-academic, I found many of the selections difficult to read, yet I persevered because they triggered new insights.

In spite of this difficulty, I would recommend this title, especially for academic and large public libraries because of its groundbreaking discussions about sexuality from the point of view of the opposite sex.

Reviewed by Susan Ballard
Assistant Director, Ritter Public Library
Ritter, OH

The Other Side of Silence: Men's Lives & Gay Identities – A Twentieth-Century History. By John Loughery. Henry Holt, c1995. ISBN 0-8050-6124X (paper) \$16.95.

The Other Side of Silence is John Loughery's history of gay male life as it unfolded in this century. The book is epic in scope but its beauty lies in its commitment to tell the story not of extraordinary lives and events, but of the richness, diversity, and passion of lives lived "off stage," as it were, in places like Omaha, Louisville, Seattle, and Pensacola.

Gay life flourished in all these places in the early and mid decades of this century. Loughery interviewed dozens of older men, using the interviews to enliven and personalize his substantial archival research. Loughery's prose is jargon free and sustained by a narrative style that enables it to be read like an old fashioned historical novel with dozens of characters moving the plot forward toward its climax, Stonewall.

Yet, The Other Side of Silence is not simply popular history. Loughery quietly, but persistently, advances an anti-essentialist argument about gay American identity, namely that among homosexuals what it means "to be gay" has varied widely from place to place and across time.

What has remained remarkably constant is the stereotype of gay men as emasculated, sinister, and predatory, figures alternately of fun or fear. Happily, we have books like this one to remind us that gay people have always and everywhere proved that stereotype false.

The Other Side of Silence is not only appropriate but necessary for public, academic and (open-minded) secondary school libraries.

Reviewed by Bill Thompson

Volunteer with the GLBT RT!!!

Join us! We are always looking for energetic committee members. Interested candidates must be members of ALA. Please mail/email your nominations to the GLBTRT at the ALA address on the back of this newsletter, or attend our meetings during conference and see if you would like to volunteer. We look forward to working with you!

Book Reviews Continued...

Vanitas. By Joseph Olshan. Simon & Schuster, 1998. ISBN 0-684-83396-4 \$23.00 (cloth)

Joseph Olshan's *Vanitas* is not a terrible book, it's simply not terribly good. *Vanitas* tells the mildly diverting story of Sam Solomon, a freelance magazine writer who is hired to write the memoirs of Elliot Garland, a Bernard Berenson-like figure, who is dying of AIDS. While in London researching the book, Solomon meets, has an affair, and falls in love with Cajun Bobby LaCour, Garland's mysterious and handsome ex lover. Complications ensue, many of them knotted around the *Vanitas*, a charcoal drawing LaCour once did of a beautiful HIV+ man. Solomon sees the painting in Garland's apartment, is captivated by it, and determines that he must have it.

More complications ensue. Solomon's old girlfriend, Jessica, and her daughter, Eva, also play a large part in the novel. Solomon yearns to be a father. Eva needs a father—or so everyone says. Jessica meanwhile is carrying on with a married man. Oh and there's a gay angel, too, which occasionally appears to Solomon. In short, plenty happens in *Vanitas*. Maybe too much.

The novel reads as though Olshan had an idea for a story, or, rather, for several stories—one about a man dying of AIDS who wants to lure his lover back, another about a man who wants to enshrine his beauty in a picture, another about a gay man who wants to be a father—that Olshan combined into a novel. What mars *Vanitas* is a pretension to an emotional depth and complexity the novel is unable to achieve. For example, not for a second did I believe that the portrait after which the book is named, the much described *Vanitas*, was as beautiful, compelling, as masterful as everyone in the novel claims.

I saw it for what it was, a transparent and convenient plot device, the sort of thing that Charles Ludlam would have sent up beautifully in a play. *Vanitas* is appropriate for academic libraries pursuing gay and lesbian collections and for public libraries.

Reviewed by Bill Thompson

Shy Girl. By Elizabeth Berg. NY:Farrar, Straus, Giroux, 1999. ISBN 0-374-26352-3.

First novelist Elizabeth Berg has drawn a portrait of two women, Sasha (Shy) and Alta, moving through a web of family secrets and crisis to reconnect with each other after a traumatic leave-taking years earlier. Alta Corral, a sexually adventurous, butch woman, works as a body piercer in San Francisco and rides a motorcycle. Shy Mallon, Alta's former next-door neighbor during their childhood, has returned, pregnant, from her home in Seattle to be at her dying mother's bedside. Alta has never gotten over the women's teenage love affair, which ended abruptly with Shy running away from home.

Now Shy is involved with Erik, the father of her baby. As the two women reconnect, their intimacy revives, now complicated by their very different lives.

The strengths of the novel are in the portrayal of the complex emotions between Alta and Shy and beautiful descriptions of San Francisco and its residents: The City was a home Alta had found too late. How she would have loved it in her tomboy years, walking up those steep hills with smiling girls moving fast all around, and leather-men nodding at her with respect...At some points, *Shy Girl* seems bogged down in excessive use of flash-backs and stilted dialogue, but overall the novel touches the reader with its tender evocation of teenage girls in love and with its slow unraveling of family secrets involving Holocaust survivors and victims. Recommended for all libraries with contemporary fiction collections.

Reviewed by Kathy Anderson
Reference Librarian
Atlantic County Public Library, NJ

Freedom to Differ: The Shaping of the Gay and Lesbian Struggle for Civil Rights. By Diane Helene Miller. New York University Press, 1998. ISBN 081475595X (cloth); 0814755968 (paper)

An academically oriented look at the role homophobia plays in keeping lesbians and gays from full participation in the business of the nation. The author begins with a discussion of the public perceptions and societal restrictions placed upon homosexuals whether in the closet or, especially so, when publicly out. Miller explains how heightened visibility of sexual orientation has created opportunities and successes for members of the community. However, she also illustrates how this greater awareness of homosexuality is often used as a weapon to distort the message and defame individuals by labeling them with half-truths and total lies. This opening philosophical segment leads into two detailed examinations of the experiences of Roberta Achtenberg during her Senate confirmation hearing for the position of assistant secretary for HUD (successful) and those of Colonel Margarethe Cammermeyer at the hands of the military (unsuccessful).

Using testimony records in both cases and a plethora of source materials, the author uses the words of both supporters and detractors to bring home the point of her central thesis—that individuals are harmed by processes that look at people as an extreme group and deny their personal attributes.

Exhaustive documentation makes this a fine source book for other explorations into the arena of Gay and Feminist Studies. Geared mainly for academic libraries, the volume will be useful and helpful for most general collections that contain materials on gender and sexuality issues. It is also recommended for collections that have populations interested in the politics of homosexuality.

Reviewed by Joe Fanning, Librarian,
Columbia High School, Maplewood, NJ

The Global Emergence of Gay and Lesbian Politics: National Imprints of a Worldwide Movement. Edited by Barry D. Adam, Jan Willem Duyvendak and Andre Krouwel. Temple University Press, 1999

(ISBN 1-56639-645-X; paper) \$22.95

Since so many of the librarians reading this review know me and expect to hear it I'll just say it now: Where is the Middle East? One of the major themes in The Global Emergence of Gay and Lesbian Politics is the influence and effect of religion on gay and lesbian life and politics, so why isn't there an essay concerning the Middle East, where Islam or Judaism is involved in every facet of life. As a result, I exchanged a few e-mails with Prof. Adam on the subject; I won't quote him without his permission, but I am content with his response. As it is, the book is reasonably representative given the constraints of space and the search for researchers.

Still, it seems that in addition to the need to include the Middle East, the work should have included something from the Indian subcontinent and at least one more nation from the Far East. The styles of the individual chapters vary drastically, some in a style that can be appreciated by most readers and some which demanded a stronger background in gay studies or political science. All have extensive notes providing additional sources and information and most have an added bibliography.

The index unfortunately is weak and there were a number of errors that should have been caught—the wrong month is given for Stonewall and I found some seasonal confusion in the Australian chapter. Despite these faults, the book is indeed a proud start to important studies. I highly recommend it for gay/lesbian academic collections as well as similar political science and area studies collections.

Reviewed by Ethel R. Magal, MA
Library of Life Sciences and Medicine
Tel Aviv University, Tel Aviv

Israel On The Fringe: Gays and Lesbians in Politics. By David Rayside. Cornell University Press, 1998. ISBN 0-8014-8374-3. \$19.95 paper; \$49.95 cloth.

Part of a recent burst of publishing on gay politics in the social sciences, this highly detailed analytic work by a veteran Canadian activist and political scientist compares the political systems of Great Britain, Canada and the United States as case studies of the degree of effective involvement by homosexuals in public life since the 1960s. Rayside's objectives were equally to evaluate the gains made in party and legislative politics by gay persons and "the effect of direct engagement with institutionalized politics on the gay, lesbian, bisexual and transgendered movement" (p.1).

The introductory essay on "Activist Influence and Political Context" sets a useful framework within which the individual country studies may be considered and is worth reading for its discussion of the factors involved in

dissecting the intersection of social movements with mainstream institutions of power, including strategy, organizational approaches and the scope of colliding agendas. The writing style is a little dry and, while the attention to detail is necessary to make specific points, it makes for heavy going. Three prominent openly gay politicians whose candidacies and service broke new ground in their nation's respective political arenas agreed to be interviewed as part of this study, British Labour MP Chris Smith, Canada's New Democratic MP Svend Robinson, and United States' Congressional Representative Barney Frank. Readers should review the articles on the United States, Canada and Britain in the 1999 volume The Global Emergence of Gay and Lesbian Politics and examine the biographical anthology on U.S. homosexual politicians, Trailblazers, prior to reading Rayside's volume. Useful for collections in large public, college and university libraries.

Reviewed by Robert Ridinger
University Library
Northern Illinois University,
DeKalb, Ill.

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