



The Lavender Salon Reader

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Michael L. Nitz, editor & publisher

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Differing opinions expressed about *Vital Ties*

May's meeting was held at Marge's lovely home. Many thanks, Marge. After an Italian potluck, the group settled in for a lively discussion of Karen Kringle's *Vital Ties*. The book elicited strong and mixed opinions as to what purpose the author had intended and how well she accomplished that goal. Most agreed that there were far too many characters that were not as well developed as we would have liked; the book could easily have been turned into a Wisconsin version of *Tales of the City*. Thanks to Jeff for that concept!

July Meeting Change!

The July meeting scheduled for Sunday the 25 will be held at 6pm at Michael's apartment. The address is 1474 Home Avenue, Menasha. Call 738-0497 for more information. The meeting will consist of a potluck and a viewing of *The Children's Hour*, followed by a discussion of the film.

A meeting with author Eric Marcus

Michael attended the American Library Association conference in New Orleans June 25-30. As a participant of the ALA Gay & Lesbian Book Awards Committee, he was invited to escort Eric

Marcus (author of *Making History: the struggle for gay and lesbian equal rights, 1945-1990*) to a social and then to dinner along with the other members of the Book Awards Committee. Eric was a delightful person to meet. His book *Making History* is a collection of oral histories of people who were deeply involved with the early gay rights movement. The book has recently been published in paperback.

August Reading

Paul Russell's book *Boys of Life* will be discussed at the August meeting. The meeting date will be set at the July meeting. Location and date for the August meeting will be posted here in *The Lavender Salon Reader*.

Reviews of books current interest

Given the conversation on lesbian authors during May's meeting and the desire for excellent lesbian fiction writing; you might find the following review of a new book of interest. The review came through the Internet on the International Gay & Lesbian Reader. The following review is reprinted without permission of the author.

The Sea of Light by Jennifer Levin.
1993, Dutton \$21.00.

One of a writer's most difficult challenges is to write convincingly

in a voice that is not really their own. A competent writer can make you believe that the pages you're turning are the thoughts of a forty-five year old Indian matriarch living in New Delhi even though he is actually a thirty-year-old African-American from Minneapolis. A very good writer can be two different voices. And a great writer can tell a story in three, six, nine different voices without your ever realizing it. They make the difficult look easy. Jennifer Levin makes it look very easy.

Levin, author of *Water Dancer*, nominated for the PEN/Hemingway Award, has returned with her new novel *The Sea of Light*. Levin has created a story woven from not one or two voices, but nine distinct voices, all told from their unique outlooks on life and how they come together is a compelling story of people coping with the ordinary and extraordinary in their lives. From the Olympic-caliber swimming star Babe Delgado, to the in-the-closet lesbian college coach, to the Jewish daughter of concentration camp survivors, Levin changes viewpoints with the fluid expertise of Ansel Adams changing the lens of his camera. *The Sea of Light* is a novel of transformation; a novel about how we survive and, more importantly, transcend the inevitable moments in everyone's lifetime that we call

stale or repeating herself, but is also able to deepen her characters while moving the story ahead, even on the third telling of the same scene, is a tribute to her skill as a writer. It's as if she is circling each person or experience in the dark, then stopping for a moment to shine a light on them before turning the light off, moving, and looking again from a different place. But now we see something that wasn't

visible before; we understand a motivation, an emotion or fear that eluded us before. This understanding is a wonderful thing to see happen because it is so much closer to how our lives are lived. Reality isn't just what we have experienced; it is the collective effects of that experience on those directly involved, and sometimes not so directly. True understanding comes from being

able to see inside another person, to understand them even for a moment, and to find what we have in common. It seems that it should be so easy to let others know what it is we feel. Instead, as Levin demonstrates, it seems almost impossible. Inevitable Moments is a review by Review by Michael Jensen 