



The Lavender Salon Reader

The Newsletter & Literary Review for
Gay & Lesbian Reading Clubs

Volume 1 Number 9
February 1994

\$2.00
Menasha, WI

Club News

Lavender Reading Salon, Appleton, Wisconsin

January's Meeting Capsule

January's meeting was held at Len and Ken's house. Due to the horrid weather that Sunday, we had a smaller than usual turnout. After sharing our potluck dinner, the conversation turned to Geoff Ryman's novel *Was*. A few reviews were read to provide a jumping off point for discussion. In general, most of those present found *Was* to be an intriguing, though disturbing, story. Members who worked in the social service sector found Dorothy's abuse particularly difficult. (It was suggested that we read a

more "happy" book next time.) *Was* did provide a springboard for a lively discussion about why movies like *The Wizard of Oz*, certain movie stars, etc. hold a special meaning for gay men and lesbians (or so we've heard).

Upcoming News

February's meeting will be a viewing and discussion of the film *Oranges are not the only fruit* based on the book of the same name by Jeanette Winterson. (See your local *LS Reminder* for map and time.)

March's meeting will be a discussion of Essex Hemphill's award-winning book of poetry and essays: *Ceremonies: prose and poetry* (Plume 1992. ISBN: 0452-268176, \$10.00.) Copies of the book can be ordered through any bookstore and are available at many of the local public libraries.

There was talk of having April's program be a reading of a play by dramatist Tennessee Williams. Further discussion and selection of the play will be held at the February meeting. Any volunteers to read the part

of Blanche DuBois?

Phoenix, Arizona

Our book group is pretty new. We are a small group; usually about 6 men. Recently, we've read *Flesh and the Word*, *Family Dancing* by David Leavitt, and *Hometowns*, edited by John Preston.

Next meeting we plan to watch several videos, including *Beyond Stonewall*. We also want to read something historical about the gay and lesbian movement.

Inside this Issue:

Book Reviews

Real Heroes by Marilyn Kaye
Lesbians, Gay Men & the Law
edited by William Rubenstein
*A Place at the Table: the gay
individual in American society*
by Bruce Bawer

Salon Cooking!

Black Olive Fried Rice

Directory of Gay & Lesbian Reading Clubs

Phoenix, AZ

📖 (Group yet not named)

Ann Arbor, MI

📖 The Hardy Boys Book Club

Appleton, WI

📖 Lavender Reading Salon.

Madison, WI

📖 The Brown Bag Book Club

📖 Frontiers.

The Lavender Salon Reader

1474 Home Avenue
Menasha, WI 54952
(414)738-0497
appleburg@aol.com (Internet)

Publisher & Editor:
Michael L. Nitz

Editorial Policy

The Lavender Salon Reader seeks to represent the broad interests of gay & lesbian book clubs; to present a place to share our activities; to provide a forum for the discussion of gay, lesbian and bisexual literature and their related industries. Opinions expressed in reviews of books, videos, and recordings represent those of the authors alone. Publication of names, photographs, or likenesses of any person, organization, event, or business should not be taken as indication of sexual orientation. The Lavender Salon Reader is not responsible for unsolicited materials.

Advertising Policy

The Lavender Salon Reader will not accept advertising which is inappropriate to the goals of a literary gay and lesbian publication, which is sexually explicit, or which fails to meet design standards. Publication of an advertisement does not represent endorsement by The Lavender Salon Reader of the goods, services, or claims made by the advertiser.

Vol. 1, no. 9, February 1994 ©1994 by LS Press, All rights reserved. Published monthly (12 issues) by LS Press, 1474 Home Avenue, Menasha, WI 54952 (414) 738-0497. Subscriptions cost \$12.00/12 issues, or \$2.00 a single issue.

Postmaster: Send address changes to The Lavender Salon Reader, 1474 Home Avenue, Menasha, WI 54952.

Editor's Note

This issue of The Lavender Salon Reader marks a new beginning! Due to the incredible response from friends and fellow Salon readers, we are broadening the scope and focus of the Reader to address the activities of gay and lesbian reading clubs throughout the country.

It is our intent that each issue continues to bring you vibrant articles and timely reviews that you will find interesting and useful. Feel free to share your copy of the Reader with friends in other gay and lesbian reading clubs.

Gay and lesbian publishing is booming and along with it the popularity of Gay & lesbian salons. This newsletter provides a place where we can all share ideas and activities.

If you are interested in writing reviews for The Lavender Salon Reader, please contact the editor. Review copies of books are available. In future issues we look forward to expanding the number of reviews: especially books from smaller presses and materials in various formats.

On page five is a coupon for subscribing to The Lavender Salon Reader. Subscriptions are \$12 per year for twelve issues.

Single issues, where available, will sell for \$2.00 each. To distribute multiple copies within your book club contact the editor.

We hope you have been enjoying this newsletter and that you will continue to find informative articles within these pages. Congratulations! We could not have made it this far without you!

O

New Books of Interest in Your Public Library!

(Books not available at your public library, can often be obtained through inter-library loan. See your public librarian for assistance.)

☞Comstock, Gary D. *Gay theology without apology*. Pilgrims Press, 1993. \$14.95.

☞Cooper, Bernard. *A year of rhymes*. Viking, 1993. \$20.00.

☞Corbin, Steven. *Fragments that remain: a novel*. Alyson Publications, 1993. \$19.95.

☞Curry, Hayden. *A legal guide for lesbian and gay couples*. 7th edition. Nolo Press. 1993.

☞Koestenbaum, Wayne. *The queen's throat: opera, homosexuality, and the mystery of desire*. Poseidon Press, 1993. \$22.00.

Real heroes
by Marilyn Kaye.

Gulliver, 1993
0-15-200563-3 \$16.95
Review by Wendy E. Betts

After his mother leaves his father, eleven-year-old Kevin's love for his dad, Charley, takes on a fierce loyalty and admiration. His conviction that his father is the greatest guy in the world is strengthened when Charley (a cop) rescues a family from a gunman and becomes a television hero. But Kevin's hero worship is strained when Charley joins a campaign to get Kevin's gym teacher, Mr. Logan, fired after learning he is HIV positive. Forced to realize that his brave, upright father can be both cowardly and unreasonable, Kevin must learn that obvious heroism is not always the best answer to a situation -- and that just because you love someone, it doesn't mean they're always right.

Real Heroes is a sincere but rather limited book. Many of the characters exist merely to serve as mouthpieces for attitudes or information, giving the book a didactic feeling -- and Mr. Logan is simply a plot element, whose problems are trivialized, important only because they affect Kevin. But Kevin and his father are believable, sympathetic characters and their relationship -- and what Kevin learns about it -- is the real core of the story.

Reprinted with permission from
THE WEB Online Review
Wendy E. Betts also edits *The WEB: celebrating children's literature*.
Sample copies may be requested by
writing to The Web, Box 401, Santa Cruz,
CA 95061

Lesbians, gay men & the law

Edited by William B. Rubenstein

New Press, 1993
1-56584-027-5 \$45.00

Quite possibly the best book ever written on how the law affects gay men and lesbian women

has just been released. *Lesbians, Gay Men & the Law* contains historical information

going back to the Plymouth Colony, contemporary articles on constitutional law, lots of case summaries and briefs and even political commentary on the gay rights movement from people like Larry Kramer and Urvashi Vaid.

If you are interested in the law, you must get this book. Divided into six major sections, virtually every aspect of the law is covered as it applies to gay men and lesbian women. The six sections are titled: Basic Documents. The Regulation of Lesbian and Gay Sexuality. The Regulation of

Lesbian and Gay Identity, Coming Out, Speaking Out, Joining In. Lesbians and Gay Men in the Workplace. Legal Recognition of Lesbian and Gay Relationships. Lesbian and Gay Parenting.

Not only does the book contain the legal documents used in gay-related court cases, but personal accounts of the parties involved are also included. The interview with Michael Hardwick after the landmark Supreme Court decision of *Bowers v. Hardwick* (in which the nation's highest court declared that states have the right to pry into private, consensual sex acts and criminalize them) is extremely

interesting.

Also included are entertaining stories detailing the personal accounts of gay and lesbian people who were affected by the law. Some of these stories have little to do with the court cases presented, but provide a framework for understanding how the law affects people personally.

Lesbians, Gay Men and the Law is definitely not a stuffy lawbook meant for judicial libraries alone. It is a very thorough, yet entertaining look at the law from a gay perspective that the common person can easily relate to.

The entire contents of *The Electronic Gay Community Magazine* are Copyright 1993 by The Land of Awes Computer

*A place at the table: the
gay individual in
American society*

by Bruce Bawer

Poseidon Press, 1993.

0-671795333. \$21.00

[This review came unidentified via the Internet.]

I read this book last weekend, and I've been thinking about it all week. The first thing to say is that it's a serious, thoughtful book by someone who genuinely believes that he has the best interests of gay people in mind. The next thing to say is that it's so full of contradictions that it's hard to know what to make of it. The announced purpose of the

book is to demonstrate to a gay teenager that he can be a happy conservative. (The book is addressed almost exclusively to a male audience.) But it reads much more like a long exercise in self-justification by a gay conservative who is having trouble holding on to the illusion that his conservative friends really value him as a human being. The extensive autobiographical sections are by turns painful and boring.

The book opens with the author spying a young, butch teenager eyeing gay magazines in a bookstore. The author laments what that teenager is going to learn about being gay from those magazines. What's

intriguing here, and what I'm still puzzling over, is that this scene is a reenactment of the cruising that the author laments, and, moreover, the object of the cruising is clearly a teenager. The author expresses a desire to show this teenager his own image of gay life, though, of course, being the upstanding citizen he is, he passes on the opportunity. What is the author saying here? Is he deliberately setting up this cruising scene to contrast it with the popular image of homosexuals? Or is the irony completely lost on him? Judging from his thorough (and surprising, given his literary credentials) inability to appreciate

(Continued on page 5)



Salon Cooking! The best of the Potlucks



I've made this recipe lots of times. It's delicious. Use any vegetables that are in season. The dish can also be baked as a casserole. You might want to halve the pepper though; too much and this dish is only for fans of really peppery hot food!

Black Olive Fried Rice

1/4 cup olive oil
1 tbs finely chopped peeled fresh ginger
2 tsp chopped garlic
1/2 cup chopped black olives (one small can)
4 cups cooked brown rice
2 tbs Thai fish sauce
1 tbs Thai (Chinese) sweet black bean sauce
2 tbs white pepper
2 tbs chicken stock (or water)
diced red bell pepper, scallions, tomatoes,
cilantro, other vegetables

Heat olive oil in a large skillet over high heat. Add ginger and garlic and sauté until lightly browned, about 1½ minutes. Add olives and stir-fry 1 minute. Add rice, fish sauce, black bean sauce, and white pepper and cook stirring constantly 3 minutes. Add chicken stock and cook, stirring 2 more minutes. Transfer to a platter. Sprinkle with bell pepper, scallions, tomatoes, and cilantro. Serve.

From *Tommy Tang's Thai Cooking*.

(Continued from page 4) A place at...

irony as demonstrated else where in the book, one seriously wonders what his intention is here.

The author early on develops the theme of the isolation of "subculture" gays (I still haven't figured out whether I'm one or not; I've lived almost all of my life in the suburbs, but I identify strongly with the denizens of the Castro and Greenwich Village), contrasting that with the healthfulness of living among heterosexuals. (The value of having primarily heterosexual friends is assumed, not argued.) But the book concludes in its most powerful scene with the painful, public humiliation of the author and his "companion" by a heterosexual couple they have long believed to be among their closest friends. In this scene, the author discovers that these people whose friendship he values don't respect his life or his relationship at all. One might expect that such a rejection would cause a moment's reflection about the value of such a friendship. It might also instill in one a

little sympathy for those gays who feel the need to challenge heterosexual "friends" from time to time, lest they too discover in such an ugly way that their friends are just saying the right things as best they know how. But no such sympathy is to be found in this book; those "in your face" gays are just alienating heterosexuals.

[As an aside, I can't imagine any gay person whose perspective hasn't been warped by the *New York Times* actually calling his lover a "companion." Here Lassie, Lassie.]

Other contradictions include repeated rantings at gay leaders in the early 1970s for their emphasis on the right to have sex instead of the right to marry. The author's analysis at first seems completely ahistorical, completely ignoring the social conditions that focused gays' activism of the period on sexual freedom, not yuppiedom. But later, the author lets on that he is fully aware of those social conditions, and, moreover, acknowledges that until about 10 years ago, even he would have found the idea of gay marriage laughable. Even

leaving aside the question of the desirability of gay marriage, the acknowledgment that the very idea of it was unthinkable 20 years ago undermines the criticism of those who did not argue for it then.

The problem, the author asserts, is that "subculture" gays hold themselves out as representative of all gays. But, he insists, most gays are actually like him. (Well-to-do, white, male, Manhattanites?) If (heterosexual) people would just realize this, their prejudices would disappear. So anything that makes them think that most gays are like the "subculture" gays is counterproductive. Gay pride parades are a definite no-no, unless the participants are wearing suits and carrying briefcases. The first problem here is that the gays the author wants to see in a parade would never in a million years show their faces publicly, and he acknowledges this fact. The bigger problem is that people like him wouldn't even be calling for a parade of suits if there weren't the parades we

(Continued on page 6)

YES!

Please enter my subscription to The Lavender Salon Reader!



Name _____
Address _____

Enclose check or money order for \$12 for 12 issues of The Lavender Salon Reader: the literary newsletter for gay & lesbian book clubs

Mail coupon with check or money order to
Michael L. Nitz, 1474 Home Avenue, Menasha WI 54952

(Continued from page 5) A place at...
have today. His book is an explicit reaction to the gay images he sees; he has been prompted by the current images to offer his own. Now we have two competing images, and I think that's great. The author might wish that the relative strengths of these two images were reversed, but at least we have those images. If it were not for the images offered by the parade people, there would be no images of gay people, just more silence and more private suffering. The suits would happily have stayed in the closet.

And why is it that "sub-culture" gays are vilified for purporting to represent gay people? (Do they actually so

purport?) At the same time that they (we?) are criticized for this, they (we?) are also criticized for failing to recognize that the religious right does not represent Christianity. But the religious right claims to represent Christianity at least as much as "subculture" gays have ever claimed to represent gays. In fact, a group of evangelicals has just named Marilyn Quayle "Christian Woman of the Year."

And about irony. The author describes with contempt Joan Jett Black's campaign for the presidency in 1992, in which she declared something to the effect of "When all those people voted for Other, I knew they were voting for me

because I'm the most Other Ms. Thang here." But we don't want to be seen as the Other, the author laments. In its context, JJB's statement is not only uproariously funny, but makes exactly that point about Otherness. But because it's coming from a black drag queen, it couldn't possibly be that deep.

I could say more, and I could be more organized. There are lots of things going on in this book, some of them illuminating, but many of them reflecting the author's still evolving understanding of his place as a gay individual.

&



TLSR

1474 Home Avenue
Menasha, WI 54952