

how david cassidy outed me

OUTWEEK

THE
LESBIAN
AND GAY
NEWS
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NO. 74

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the
NEW CLONE
VS.
the
OLD CLONE

by michelangelo signorile

**JULIO RIVERA
SLAYING SUSPECTS
IN CUSTODY**



NEWS • SEXUAL POLITICS • HEALTH • THE ARTS

We're Here, We're Queer, We're Fabulists

MEN ON MEN 3: BEST NEW GAY FICTION edited by George Stambolian.

Dutton/Plume. \$19.95 cl. \$10.95 pb. 376 pp.

by Max Cavitch

The stories that cultures tell about themselves serve a wide variety of purposes. In his introduction to *Men on Men 3*, George Stambolian acknowledges two divergent claims for what gay fiction should be and do: "Some have urged writers to seek a larger audience in order to counter the danger of creating a literature that is overly introspective or ghettoized in its vision. Others have voiced the fear that efforts to reach a broader readership will be corrupted by the desire for commercial success, which may force writers to sacri-

fice the particularity of their experience and its power to contest social myths." One of the strong points of the *Men on Men* series has been its ability to synthesize these claims. For the past four years, Stambolian has provided a slick, commercially successful venue for the presentation of dozens of solid, occasionally dazzling works of short fiction. Rarely do these stories sacrifice gay specificity in favor of mass appeal or palatability. On the contrary, it is their faithfulness to the experience of being gay that makes them so compelling. Gay experience is human

experience, after all, and perhaps, with the continued help of editors like Stambolian, we won't have to keep reminding others (and ourselves) of that all-important point.

Of all the social myths that gay fiction has the power to contest, the most powerful is the myth of heterosexuality—the belief that, as Stambolian puts it, "heterosexual experience is somehow natural, generic, outside of history." If they do nothing else, the stories in *Men on Men 3* remind us that "heterosexual experience" as such wouldn't exist without an alternative, gay mythology. (One need only witness the extraordinarily anxious scruti-

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BOOKS

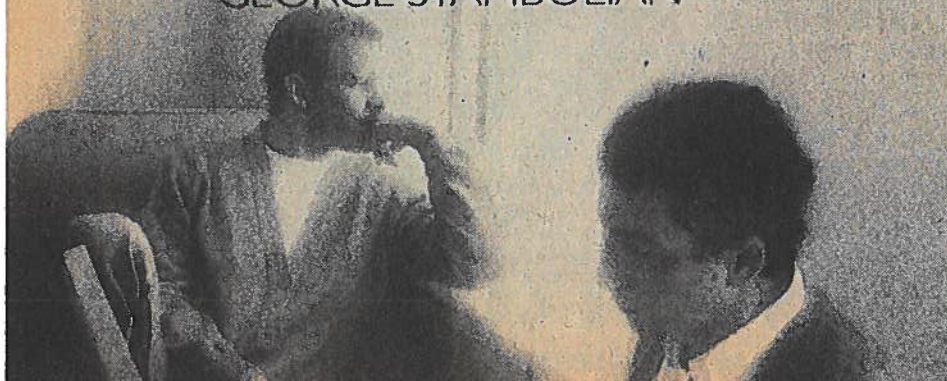
MEN ON MEN 3

BEST NEW GAY FICTION

- _____ BRUCE BENDERSON _____
- _____ CHRISTOPHER BRAM _____
- _____ BERNARD COOPER _____
- _____ ANDREW HOLLERAN _____
- _____ JOE KEENAN _____
- _____ PAUL MONETTE _____
- _____ FELICE PICANO _____
- _____ EDMUND WHITE _____
- _____ AND 12 OTHERS _____

EDITED AND WITH AN INTRODUCTION BY

GEORGE STAMBOLIAN



Necrolatry

by Rene Ricard

He's taken every pen I
Ever had. All my poems
have been trampled literally
Underfoot. Silly ass white-
Boy. You haven't begun
And after III yrs. To
Penetrate the surface of
Possible evil .Remember
The first time he told you
"I love you", you caught him
Picking yr. pocket as he Blu. U.

Rene Ricard's latest books are God With Revolver (Hanuman Books) and Trusty Sarcophagus Co. (Inanout Press). ▼

POETRY

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ARTS

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ny currently brought to bear upon various representations of gay experience to realize how fragile, how temporary, normative heterosexuality actually is.)

But these stories *do* do something else: Even as they pick apart and rewrite our culture's hoary sexual mythology by insisting upon the relevance and vivacity of gay experience, they question our own notions of what gay experience is. Several of these pieces center on characters who don't seem to claim—or even acknowledge—a gay identity. Bruce Benderson's "A Happy Automaton," Michael Lassell's "Willie" and Felice Picano's "Why I Do It" are more concerned with different, though related, mythic structures like class and race, which are challenged by complex emotional and sexual connections between men—connections that the word "gay" doesn't adequately describe.

The family is another cherished American myth that gay fiction has the power to rewrite. Increasingly, this means asking not so much how gay experience can be accommodated to family structures, but rather what family structures are adequate to the moment we're living in, whether we are gay or not. Most of the stories in this volume, including Christopher Bram's "Meeting Imelda Marcos," Philip Gambone's "Enrollment," George Stambolian's "In My Father's Car," Alex Jeffer's "My Face in a Mirror" and Andrew Holleran's "Lights in the Valley," ask this question in one way or another.

If there is any mythology that the stories in *Men on Men 3* don't adequately address (given their prescribed focus on male experience), it is that of sexual desire. Despite that fact that who we are is very much more than what we do in bed, the reality of our desire is one of the most powerful answers we have to those who would deny our existence on every level. It seems to me that as the *Men on Men* series has "evolved," the number of turn-ons per page has decreased dramatically from volume to volume. Not that there isn't food for fantasy here, but where it exists, it is presented in a way that seems almost furtive and apologetic. This was the catastrophe of the recent film *Longtime Companion*, whose makers could have learned a lot

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from the smartly sexy entries in last month's Gay and Lesbian Video Festival. Similarly, *Men on Men 3* suffers from the absence of authors like Robert Glück and Dennis Cooper (from the original *Men on Men*), who, without subscribing to the very limited mythology of gay male porn, manage explicitly both to acknowledge and to challenge their readers' experience of desire. Sadly, *Men on Men 3* participates, however unwittingly, in the suppression of one of the most important stories of all: the sex story.

But the new and terrible story is the story of AIDS and, while most of the pieces in *Men on Men 3* choose not to address the crisis directly (one brilliant exception is Robert Haule's "Blond Dog"), they do ask us just what it means to be gay at this particular moment in history—the AIDS crisis. In a recent profile of Edmund White (whose "Skinned Alive" is this volume's final selection), *Time* magazine's Leonard Schulman claimed that "all gay writing can be labeled pre-AIDS or post-AIDS." When I first read this, I thought Schulman was being reductive in claiming that all gay fiction must be positioned with respect to the mythology of AIDS. How could you, for example, possibly pin down the dividing line between "pre-" and "post-?" I've since come to think that his claim went not nearly far enough, inasmuch as everything I read now, whether it was published in 1990 or 1590, becomes implicated in my questions about the adequacy of all sorts of myths to account for my experience. The relative silence of these stories with respect to AIDS may seem like a relief to some readers; to others it will offer the chance to question how their own experience of AIDS changes the way they read.

The stories we've been told—and many of the stories we continue to tell—aren't adequate. In fact, they're killing us almost as surely as any virus. And while I don't mean to claim that the publication of a volume of gay fiction can save us from AIDS (or from prejudice or from violence), the stories in *Men on Men 3*—despite their own, perhaps inevitable, inadequacies—are an important contribution to the creation of a new, complex and liberating mythology for a complex and increasingly liberated gay culture that is no fiction. ▼