

The Cat Came Back: A Review

Susan Jasmin

Stevie, Andy, Duncan, Diamond, Jessie and Pat, the starting line for a boy's junior varsity hockey team? No, all girls, and pet peeves aside for giving masculine/androgynous names to young female characters, Hilary Mullins' recent book, *The Cat Came Back*, from Naiid Press, is a positive novel in diary form of seventeen year old Stevie Roughgarden whose senior year at a private prep school is suddenly consumed by adult realizations of sexuality, peer pressure, political statement and the treatment authority figures can inflict on young adults efforts at non-conformity.

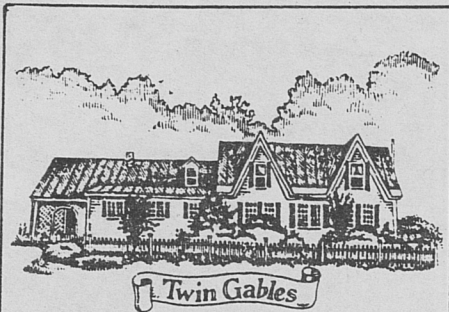
The impetuous for change is a new teammate on the girl's hockey team Stevie captains, named Andrea Snyder. Andy becomes the focal point for infatuations despite Stevie's rather lengthy involvement with male professor Rik Wood. The affair between teacher and student is rather typical prep school pap in an isolated setting. As Stevie gains strength in her convictions throughout the course of the book and becomes aware of lesbian relationships around her, the journal entries slowly undergo a transformation from raging adolescent to conscious decision-making adult. An en-

counter with a lesbian couple early in the novel leaves Stevie wondering if Lois, Andy's mother, local college professor and acquaintance of the two women, "would still like them if she knew. Maybe she would flunk them or something."

Stevie is also prone to panic attacks that "fuzz" her out of reality momentarily. Andy, willing to make the most of her new friendship with Stevie, time and time again snaps her out of them and back into the present. A creative writing course introduces Stevie to *Rubyfruit Jungle*, after which she can finally write in her journal of Andy, "ILOVEHER".

The Cat Came Back realistically relates the ongoing battle between adolescents and adults, while sensitively working out the broad reaching feelings of initial affection, physical attraction and the ultimate reality of yes, I'm queer and it is neither bad or deviant.

Hilary Mullins lived in Burlington Vermont for seven years and dedicated this, her first novel to her mother and "the women of Burlington". She will be reading from *The Cat Came Back* on October 20th at 7 pm at Chassmen and Bem in Burlington. ▼

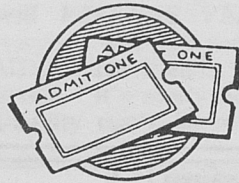


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