

Reading Offers an Alternative to Complaining About the Weather! Short Reviews of Three Books.

Michael Warner

As the winter months stretch endlessly into spring, clouds fill the sky, and the grey weather makes many of us "winter vimps" long for warmth, sunshine, the OUT-of-doors-the escape of a nice day to hike or swim-there are many ways to temper cabin fever. The one I find most reliable and least dependant on variable factors is curling up on my sofa with the companionship of a good book. Like everyone else, during the holidays I found myself at a loss for the time to really enjoy a quiet moment alone with a book. Yet I have managed in the past months to read several books which I recommend.

For those interested in biography, *Cures: a Gay Man's Odyssey* by Martin Duberman has a lot to recommend it. Duberman is an educator, writer, historian and critic, who, according to advance releases, has made himself a major figure in contemporary culture. His story is one which is familiar to many. Growing up in very homophobic times, the 40s and 50s, he relates his attempt and struggle to "cure" his homosexuality. From his own internalized homophobia to the hope offered by psychoanalysis, we follow him on this quest to understand and to finally accept and celebrate himself. Part biography, part history (especially for those of us who came of age in the post-Stonewall era), this book illustrates more than just Martin Duberman's story, it documents the story of a generation and the "coming out" of the gay movement. Not exactly light reading but worth a shot.

For me, fiction tends to be the greatest help in escaping from daily routines, problems and boredom. *Vanishing Rooms* by Melvin Dixon is an amazing book which I enjoyed a lot. The narrative follows the reactions of three main characters to a brutal and untimely death. This action happens outside the story yet affects each character in a significant and different way. The rhythm and pace of Dixon's prose is dictated by the one-two-three, one-two-three steps of aspiring dancers, Jesse and Ruella. Each learns, grows and develops as the chapters unfold. The cathartic event which cements the two of them together in this novel with Lonny, a young street

punk, is the senseless gay-bashing of Jesse's lover Metro. This violence, which could have been lifted from the headline of any American newspaper, is secondary to the complex character study which Dixon accomplishes. The book is just over 200 pages and reads quickly. It has a very contemporary flavor. Unlike some fiction, *Vanishing Rooms* did not leave me feeling cheated by the author. It was as if, for a brief moment, I was allowed to step into the intertwined lives of three people and observe for myself their perceptions and emotions.

Finding one's way in the world has been made much easier in the last few years by the phenomenon of so-called "self-help" books. While I don't usually spend much time reading books of this genre, one I did find both interesting and helpful was *Intimacy Between Men: How to Find and Keep Gay Love Relationships* by John H. Driggs and Stephen E. Finn. Counselors who write from experience with gay men, Driggs and Finn manage to make their observations and advice positive, helpful and interesting. Illustrating and documenting the theme that men (especially gay men) have a hard time developing and maintaining intimacy, they offer first-hand experience and advice for overcoming and dealing with the barriers which parenting, society, conditioning and even plain fear have taught us to erect and hide behind. Topics covered include the differences between kinds and levels of intimacy, between sexuality and intimacy, coming out and coupling up. It's a good book for the gay man looking not only for "Mr. Right" but for himself as well. It's also a good read for gay men already in relationships who are looking to strengthen and develop their them. Given the repressive homophobic society in which we live, we can all use a little help now and then!

These three books represent only the tip of the iceberg and there are literally hundreds of titles worth considering when snuggling down this season. So go ahead and enjoy! ▼

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CONFERENCES

OutWrite '92 National lesbian & gay writers conference. Boston, Park Plaza Hotel, March 20-22, 1992. Sponsored by *OutLook* magazine and *Gay Community News*. Registration \$40 until Feb 15, \$50 after Feb 15 and at the door. Contact Sue Hyde at (617) 695-0511 or write to OutWrite '92, 540 Castro St., San Francisco, CA 94114-2512.

EDUCATION

Champlain College gay, lesbian, bisexual support group. Weekly meetings in Student Resource Center. Contact Becky Peterson at 658-0800 ext. 2605 or Carol Moran-Brown at 658-0800 ext. 2603 for more info.

Lesbian Educators Meeting occasionally- Call Margaret at (802) 879-6559.

Lyndon State College gay, lesbian, bisexual support group, The Beacon. Call Mary Sue Kelly at (802) 626-9371 ext. 140, or write **The Beacon**, c/o Student Activities Office, Lyndon State College, Lyndonville, VT 05851.

Johnson State College Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual Group meets Wednesdays twice a month from 6-7:30 p.m. in a confidential location. Group open to student, faculty, staff and members of the local community. Call Jackie or Shelly at (802) 635-2365 ext. 259 for more info.