## reviews

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## Living At Night

By Mariana Romo-Carmona

REVIEWED BY KIMBERLY A. WARD

"I didn't always understand the logic of fields and migrating birds, but I wanted to belong to all of it, even if it wasn't my birthplace. I wanted to belong."

In this eloquent moment of contemplation in Mariana Romo-Carmona's new novel, we find the kernel of the story; belonging. The character of Erica García works in a ward for the mentally retarded. It is there that she sees the way they are ostracized from the world and treated with little dignity. When decides to make their world better, somehow, she feels her own world improv-

But, this book is about more than misfortune and loneliness. It is about romance, and the life of one Puerto Rican lesbian trying to find her way in the world like ev-

In the midst of the poignant struggle is also laughter. In the opening of the book, we see that Erica has been told her birthday party will coincide with a Halloween party for the local gang. Frustrated over this slight, (her birthday is just before Halloween) she tells the reader what she thinks:

"For me, there was no direct relationship between Halloween and being gay, but to Millie and for the few friends we could claim... we were practically a coven."

Few writers can capture the fun, tenderness and romantic feel of a moment in bed with a lover, few can get such eloquence of language on the page. But Carmona is a poet as well as a novelist and the wonderful craft of her poetic skill comes through in this novel. The way she weaves the hurt and happiness together so that we get full living characters makes this book such a wonderful ead. (Spinster's (10.95)

## Goddard's MFA in Writing Program **Showcases Queer Talent**

BY KIMBERLY A. WARD

As a writing major in college, I often found myself breaking out in a cold sweat at the thought of my class assignments: "Write about your life." and "Write what you know" seemed like deadly threats to me. After all, I was not an out bisexual. And I was so "in" that I was sure every lesbian on campus would hate me when they found out. So what could I possibly write about when the teacher asked us to "take something from your past" and everyone started talking about their first kiss or the exchange student from Germany they dated in their senior year at school?

Well, after rubbing sweaty palms on my jeans I would decide to tell about my cat that got hit when I was eight, or my favorite food. There was rarely a chance to be honest about what I really found important, like the really cute girl in the library who I was SURE was a lesbian, but too frightened to approach, or the first time I had come out to a boyfriend about the fact that I found the same girls attrac-

tive that he did (and how supportive he was) and how that unnerved me a little.

As I read that essay on "why I like French toast" to the class, I was really longing to read was the stuff I was secretly writing in my diary and locking away in my dorm room. Many writers reading this right now might recall that. Many students from Composition 101 also can relate, I'm sure.

But, when I started graduate school at Goddard College, I knew I could put those days of worry behind me. The center of my concern was the craft of writing. Not with whom I was or wasn't sleeping. right from the beginning of the application process, I saw that this program was set up for acceptance of people. My dorm application even had a spot for requesting "lesbian only" housing! That was great. To top it off, most of the faculty, it turned out were gay or lesbian. Many had been honored for their work by the community. The weight that I had been carrying lifted as I attended my first residency. The people were friendly, the subjects of peoples' works in progress consisted of everything from a memoir on living in the art community in NY and rubbing elbows with such legends as Mapplethorpe to fiction about, wonder of wonders, falling in love with the girl next to you in high school!

Beyond the "gay friendliness" of the faculty, etc., I found that the goal of the program was to let you as a student choose the path along which you would grow. You as a student are empowered with the support of your teachers to make your own decisions, something that rarely happened to me in undergraduate school.

The list of important, published authors included people like Sarah Schulman, who's reputation for being a disciplined and hard writer/ teacher had many students running in fear, (along with her hearty list of published fiction and awards such as the American Library Association Gay/ Lesbian Book Award [1994] ) but, who's heart and conviction to good literature wins everyone over in time; Paul Selig, who is a performer I believe everyone must see in action to fully enjoy, is co-lead of the program and works fastidiously with his students and has had his plays published in anthologies such as "The Best American Short Plays of 1995-96"; and Chase Twichell ( a newcomer to the program last

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## **January** FRIDAY

INTHE LIFE on Vermont ETV at 11:30 p.m. "1997 Year-in-Review" Looks back at "the year that was" for gay men and lesbians. Repeat broadcast: Saturday, Jan. 3, 3:30 a.m. latenight.

Last day to register for Hepatitis B vaccine with MHP. Call 863 2437.



SATURDAY

Cross-country skiing with Chiltern Mountain Club in Warren, 10:30 a.m. FMI call Lew at (802) 253-8969. Depending on snow conditions, trip may be moved further north. Beginner and intermediate skiers welcome.



Gay And Lesbian Interest Film -Beautiful Thing is a 1996 film about two enormously likable high school chaps (played by Glenn Berry and Scott Neal) from diversely dysfunctional families in an English Midlands housing project who come of age and fall in love in spite of some major obstacles — highlighted by the relationship of one of the boys with his very earthy mother, played by Linda Henry, whose big heart ultimately winds up in the right place. Features a dynamite soundtrack by Mama Cass alone and the Mamas and the Pappas together. "You've Got To Make Your Own Kind of Music!" The Rhombus Gallery is located at the intersection of College & Church Sts. in Burlington. 652-1103. Enter on College St. Gallery is on the second floor. For more information, 802-4345653 or email:GLITTERvt@aol.com

St. Johnsbury ACAP mtg. 7 p.m. Call 748 1149 for info and location.



TUESDAY

Auditions for the Theater Factory's production of "Little Women." 7 p.m., Mann Hall auditorium at Trinity College. FMI 872 2738.

Youth Aware planning meeting, at the Ilsley Library, Middlebury.



WEDNESDAY

The Vermont Freedom to Marry Task Force will be meeting in Southern Vermont at 7 pm. 18 Grove St. Brattleboro. FMI Bari Shamas 387-

Men of Montpelier meet at Kellogg-Hubbard Library, Smiley room.



A benefit for Out In The Mountains, at Opening reception for Fine Art Photo Featuring four bands, Be That Way, The Steph Pappas Experience, Mary McGinnis and the Green Mountain Girls, and Yolanda and The Plastic Family.



the sisters lamé



WEDNESDAY

Club Toast at 165 Church St. in exhibit "scenes of Sensuousness" Burlington, \$ 6.00, starts at 8:30. featuring the work of internationally known fine art, fashion and beauty photographer Andres Aquino. 6 p.m., MoonBrook Cooperative Art Gallery, 24 Wales St. Rutland. FMI 775 9548.

> Hepatitis B vaccinations at Vermont CARES Office, 12 p.m..



THURSDAY

Eating with grace, holiday workshops for women. 1-5 p.m., Burlington. \$45. FMI call Theresa Bacon, 985-4045.

The Gay & Bisexual Men's Program Advisory Board & the Brattleboro Area AIDS Project will host an evening with Steve Howard, openly-gay Chair of Vermont's Democratic Committee (6:30 p.m.), & the Sisters Lame,