

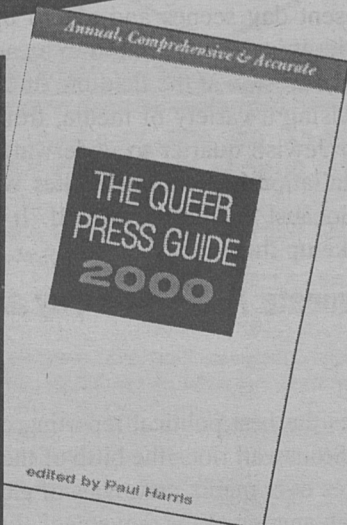
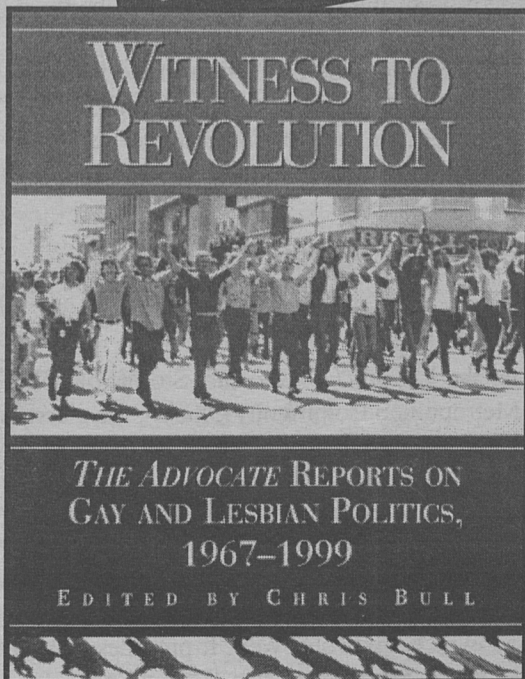
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Reading into it...

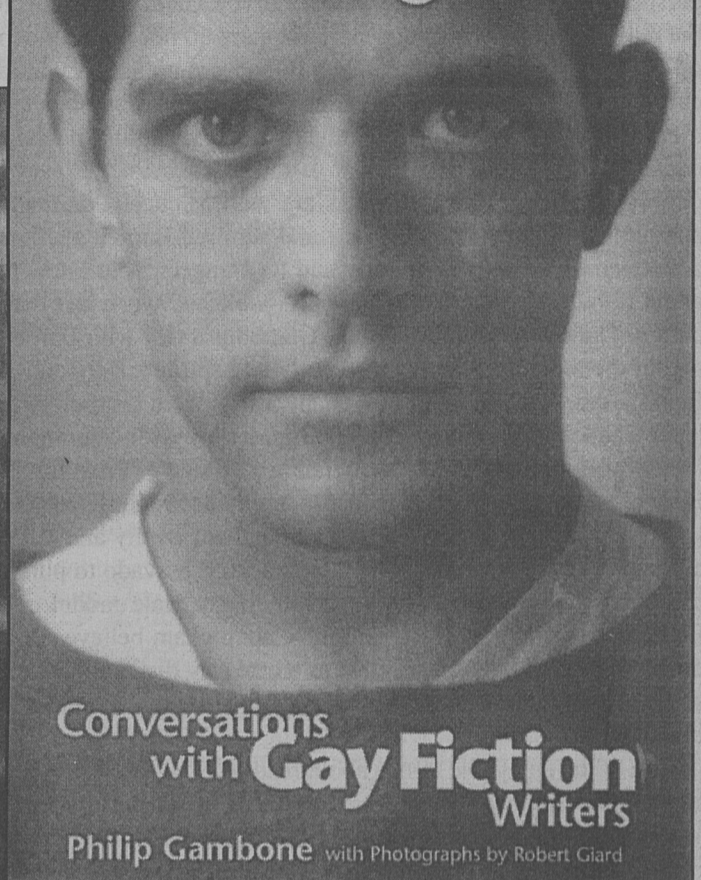


Felice Picano

the book of lies



Something Inside



Something Inside: Conversations with Gay Fiction Writers

REVIEWED BY ERNIE MCLEOD

Q: Why is Brad Gooch, one of the lesser writers featured in "Something Inside: Conversations with Gay Writers," the only writer on the front cover?

A: Because he's a pretty boy and publishers think—not without evidence—that gay men only buy books with hunks on the cover. That pet peeve out of the way, let me say that "Something Inside," while not a book for everyone, has much to offer any follower or potential follower of "gay fiction" (exactly what is meant by "gay fiction" is one of the discussions in the book) and is a near must-read for any aspiring gay fiction writer.

As the title implies, this anthology is not so much a series of formal interviews as a series of conversations between writers. Philip Gambone, who conducted all of the "conversations," is a fiction writer himself and, as such, his questions tend towards the literary and away from gossip, fashion, and political debate. There is, however, a nice balance between specific questions about each author's life and work and more general questions about where gay fiction's been and where it's going. Some examples: Can you write effectively about a plague that's not over? Is it still possible to write an original coming-out story? Is there a gay sensibility and, if so, does it depend on the concealment of homosexuality? Is a gay writer someone who just happens to be gay, or someone whose sexuality is at the very core of his work?

As a guide through these thorny issues, Gambone is mild-mannered and perceptive, refreshingly unpretentious. Rather than following a stock agenda, he takes cues from each writer and mostly lets the conversations go where they will. Some questions are repeated: Who has inspired you? Do you have any advice for beginning gay writers? What are your work habits? As someone unnaturally fascinated by the work habits of

others, particularly in comparison to my own desultory rituals, I was glad Gambone delved into the mundane yet critical matter of how various artists manage to plod through each lonely working day without going insane. I found the later interviews in the book to be more interesting than the earlier ones, which may speak to Gambone's increasing skill as an interviewer, or simply to coincidences of arrangement.

By Philip Gambone
with Photographs by
Robert Giard
University of Wisconsin
Press, 341pp, \$24.95

So, who did he interview? Twenty-one men, including established writers like Ed White, Paul Monette, David Leavitt, and Christopher Bram, as well as relatively new or lesser known writers like Brian Keith Jackson, Scott Heim, and Bernard Cooper. The interviews are arranged