

Remembrance of Rittenhouse Square

black sarah ruled
and we of lesser divinity paid homage to her
with our pansy smiles.
we breathed magnolia air, dreaming other visions
through the velvet of our mascara lashes;
and blessed ourselves with water from the shallow pond,
and kissed each handsome boy as he passed by.
the low-hung moon brought expectation to our hearts.
we chattered endlessly: mingling within, without,
seeking happiness, finding nothing
but the sad green beauty of the trees.
our priestess has another temple now,
and we the keepers of this sacred ground
have been raped, our harpstrings broken,
we sing no more—
ah, good queen sarah, why did you never speak of reality?

in Brother to Brother
Ed by Essex Hemphill
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Hey, brother, what's hap'nin'?

You know, it has occurred to me as of late that gay men are still hung up on roles. Only now, instead of the question being who's on top and who's on bottom, the question has become "Who's more of a top?" Everybody is so *Yeah-I'm-Down, What's Hap'nin'*? Of course there are still queens, and plenty of 'em, but even they throw on their Reeboks and step out cruising Flatbush Avenue. Out looking for *fellas*. If you a *fella* then you cool. If you a queen, well honey, you are not "in" this season.

Everybody's at the gym pumping iron, 'cause it's all about appearances. We've rejected the leather and the boots (too white!) and the limp wrists and snapping fingers (too effeminate!), and where are we now? Everybody wants to be the boy next door — and *have* the boy next door. And I'm no exception.

Last winter I wore my Reeboks and my alligator shirt buttoned all the way up to the top. It was a costume, the "in" one. You'd spy someone who looked like you, or what you hoped you looked like, all ghetto-ish with not a trace of that fag-juice. You'd approach.

"Hey troop! What's hap'nin'?"

And within thirty seconds, your hopes of finding the last real man were dashed, and maybe his were too. But it was cool, 'cause the night was young and there were plenty of chunky possibilities running around. Plenty of would-be homeboys in *fella* outfits. All you had to do was find the right one.

Last Saturday night, at the Garage, I was so desperate, I got on the loudspeaker and made an announcement:

WOULD THE LAST REAL MAN PLEASE STAND UP!
WOULD THE LAST REAL MAN PLEASE STAND UP!

attitudes of gay people but of nongay people as well, and the true reflection of America seen there, while not always kind, is often profound and sometimes unnerving. In gay texts America's greatest fear and deepest terror—difference—is constantly reevaluated, anatomized, not infrequently satirized, and indeed often uncomfortably and even corrosively portrayed. Gay literature has become a standard against which the unexamined certainties of all American nonhomosexual literature must now be measured.

It is clear that no anthology—let alone a section of a larger one—can reprint even a fraction of the list of contemporary gay writers, nor can a brief historical commentary adequately explore it. I have therefore decided to let the following texts speak for themselves as commentaries on the times. The selection is more emblematic than inclusive, a snapshot rather than a full-scale portrait of the decades since Stonewall as seen in some of the texts of those times. No survey of gay literature since 1969 can do justice to the diversity, the multicultural breadth, the imaginative originality of the work of all those participating in a literary project that has attempted to do no less than rewrite in modern terms the definition of love between men and to confront with the potency of the word a millennium of homophobia.

Further Reading

Roger Austen, *Playing the Game: The Homosexual Novel in America* (New York: Bobbs-Merrill, 1977); Adam Barry, *The Rise of a Gay and Lesbian Movement* (Boston: Twayne, 1987); David Bergman, *Gaiety Transfigured: Gay Self-Representation in American Literature* (Madison: University of Wisconsin Press, 1991); George Chauncey, *Gay New York: Gender, Urban Culture, and the Making of the Gay Male World, 1890-1940* (New York: Basic Books, 1994); Martin Duberman, *Stonewall* (New York: Dutton, 1993); Byrne R. S. Fone, *A Road To Stonewall: Homosexuality and Homophobia in English and American Literature, 1750-1969* (New York: Macmillan/Twayne, 1995); Jonathan Ned Katz, *Gay American History* (New York: Thomas Y. Crowell, 1976); and *Gay/Lesbian Almanac* (New York: Harper and Row, 1983); James Levin, *The Gay Novel in America* (New York: Garland, 1991); Robert K. Martin, *The Homosexual Tradition in American Poetry* (Austin and London: University of Texas Press, 1979).

Questions

Ralph Pomeroy (b. 1926)

Gay Love and the Movies (1969)

Watching love stories on TV,

watching a movie,

I wonder where we are.

I've wondered for a long time.

I've never seen any of us there,

straight on, like nouvelle vague lovers,

like psychedelic dancers.

I've never seen us, amir alimbo,

standing in the morning, waiting,
lying around in grassy meadows,
reeling in the pounding surf in a
burst of sunshine—
pale colors out of focus
or in focus, bright colors,
black and whites . . .

Where have we been all this time?
Where are we now, the right now which
we're living?—Dark boy and blond boy
up there no different than any two people together.

I've wondered sometimes if that's what
it feels like to be black—
looking on all the time at exquisite or
banal white rituals:—
the car racing along the curves of the Riviera,
Miss Crawford striding despairingly in full
sequins into suicidal waters—
but have been caught up short wondering
if a black would be offended by such a comparison.

So where do we go to see what we know exists?
Other than some campy enclave—the "in" resort
or "special" bar?
How feel or develop good longings,
good works, good words,
to make into poems or plays or novels
or songs or movies
that will celebrate our realities?

And where can we go to see,
like everybody else, those untrue-true,
crescendo-ridden technicolor fables
which begin by accident,
as do all true love stories,
and end in death,
as do all men's affairs?

Answers

William Barber (b. 1947)

The Gay Poet (1971)

I have broken the sound barrier of morality

From
The Columbia
Anthology of Gay
Literature 1998
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