

and with several TVs on at once blasting sports. This bar, The Endless Weekend, located at JFK Airport, bathes her with noise at her bartending job. When she gets home, which is in a remote industrial section of Queens, she's bathed with the noise of a place called Automobile Alley. In the first dozen pages of the book, we're bombarded with references to the underworld and other worlds of trucking, smuggling, UFOs, telepathy, television, ghost signals, the Internet, ships, jets, clocks, and satellites. But all these forms of transportation and communication are only another source of alienation for Laurie, preventing her from tuning in to her own thoughts.

However, Laurie likes to listen to her radio. One night she calls in to a late-night talk show and we're introduced to the host, Jean Shepherd, and his guest, a psychic called Ravenette. We'll learn how apt these characters' names are as the pages turn. Shepherd and Ravenette both seem to tune in to Laurie, but she's tough and confrontational; their meetings will end in near-fistfights and *fuck-you's*. Laurie reports that she has had both girlfriends and boyfriends, that she lost touch with her family, and that her mother died young. All this helps explain her alienation and anger. Laurie's tentative "radio" connections build throughout the book into a satisfying network.

As a metaphor, "reception and tuning in a specific frequency" refers to Laurie Perzin's own ability to tune into herself, which is what this story is about. She fights it at first but is slowly receptive. Helpful dogs, whose dark eyes glitter like stars in the night sky, mysteriously appear one at a time and lean against her leg. Her neighbor, an illegal immigrant from Mali, appreciates the kind things Laurie has done for her, and gives her (with difficulty, since Laurie argues about everything) a Dogon dog. Some interesting Dogon culture figures into the story. A cult leader, Raymond Gilmartin, and some of his followers place dangerous obstacles in Laurie's path. Gilmartin is described in a way that makes him sound slightly satanic, like an Antichrist figure: "As Raymond spoke, his voice remained smooth as oil, but I heard something else in it: the visual image that came to me of little fires burning around the edges." In contrast, the otherworldly radio man's pissed-off sissy hiss is not to be missed.

Laurie learns how to calm down enough to listen attentively, to think, and to fight antagonists in a smart way. By the end of the novel, she has tuned in to something truly wonderful, and she feels "energized, awake, alert." Amazingly, that's how *Radiomen* made me feel.

Mary Meriam is the author of *Conjuring My Leafy Muse* and *Girlie Calendar*.

LGBT History 101

CHRIS FREEMAN

U.S. Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual, and Transgender History

Edited by Leila J. Rupp and Susan K. Freeman

University of Wisconsin Press. 383 pages, \$29.95

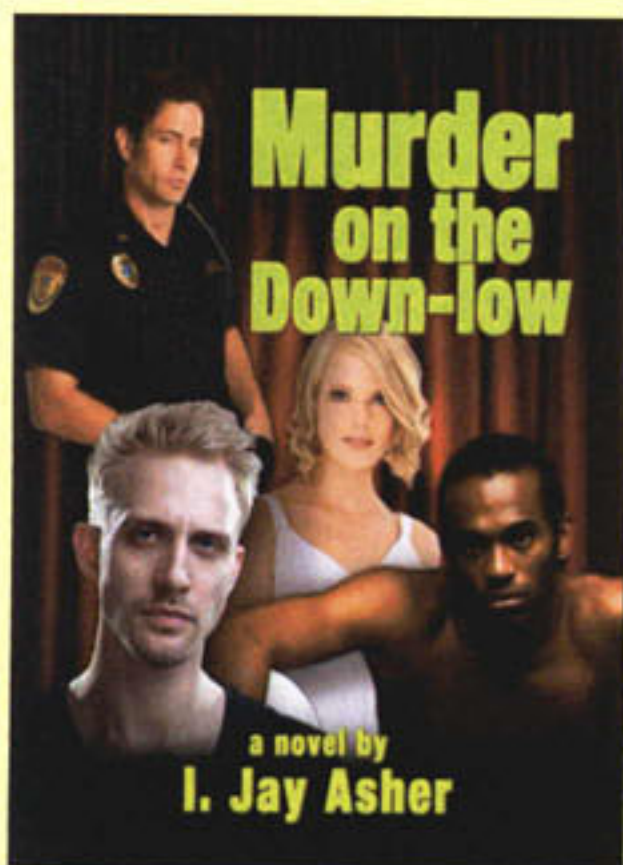
THE TIMES, they have a-changed. In 2009, the California state legislature passed SB48, the FAIR (Fair, Accurate, Inclusive, and Responsible) Education Act, mandating the inclusion of LGBT history and culture into high school curricula. But, in this era of testing, testing, and more testing, how do teachers incorporate queer content into their courses—and what exactly should they be teaching to teenagers?

Editors Leila J. Rupp and Susan K. Freeman have facilitated that discussion with their comprehensive anthology, *U.S. Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual, and Transgender History*. The book features more than 25 essays by teachers and professors about strategies they have used in the classroom and about some of the difficulties that inevitably accompany such subject matter.

Part One, on the challenges of teaching these controversial issues, begins with an essay by John D'Emilio, one of the most distinguished scholars of LGBT history in America. His offering, "Forty Years and Counting," which provides the long view of queer studies as an academic field going back to the gay liberation era, is an effective and informative look back at where we came from and how we got to this point. D'Emilio notes that "in the 1970s, there was not yet a conversation in LGBT history." Decades later, he found that even his more sophisticated students still didn't know anything about their own history: "Their ignorance was not their fault. It was evidence that the queer past does not circulate widely in the everyday lives or the formal education of Americans."

The book is an antidote to that unfortunate reality. The footnotes point readers to useful sources, little known facts, and classic works in the field. Some authors of those classic works—such as D'Emilio, Marc Stein, and Leila J. Rupp, the volume's co-editor—are represented here. Part Two, about some specific topics in LGBT history, features Stein's discussion of how he teaches Supreme Court cases affecting queer lives and issues; both the rulings and the opinions come into play, indicating not only how the court has made decisions but also how its rulings reflect and sometimes change thinking in the broader public. Included in this section are essays about 19th-century lives, about World War II and its impact on queer communities, about 1960s radicalism and the gay civil rights movement, and about AIDS, marriage equality, and the military's changing policies on gay personnel.

Part Three considers "hidden history" and its rediscovery, using oral history, fiction, media, and popular culture for teaching purposes. The work of Vito Russo in particular plays a key role in this section, as does Jonathan Ned Katz' great on-line resource, Outhistory.org. Sharon Ullman, a professor at Bryn Mawr College, ends her essay "Popular Culture: Using Televi-



"A clever psychological thriller that keeps you on the edge of your seat with great plot twists and suspense. An exciting story by a wonderful and talented writer."

— Patrick Mulhall

"An intricately woven novel of mystery, cunning, love, and friendship. Mr. Asher has taken a complicated and secretive subject and transformed it into an elegant and exciting story."

— Joanne T. Lewis

Available at www.Amazon.com

sion, Film, and the Media to Explore LGBT History” with a provocative question that she poses for her students: “As a final exercise on the use of popular culture, we might all ask our students what they see today and ask them to imagine what their children might see ‘tomorrow.’”

While the book’s primary audience is teachers and scholars, general readers interested in what kids are learning these days—or could be learning—will find this informative, readable, and educational. As the editors suggest: “What a historical perspective brings is a deeper understanding of why change has happened, and why some things have not changed. Legal, social, political, urban, and cultural history lend multiple dimensions to thinking about the queer past and present, and, in turn, the history of same-sex sexuality and gender queerness expands our understanding of all these facets of history.” We can only hope that learning this material will have an impact on the attitudes of young people, offering insights that they’ll carry with them into adulthood, into voting booths and work places, and back to their families.

Chris Freeman teaches English and gender studies at USC. He is co-editor, with James Berg, of The American Isherwood.

Does Marriage Matter?

DALE BOYER

**Untangling the Knot:
Queer Voices on Marriage, Relationships, and Identity**

Edited by Carter Sickels

Ooligan Press. 248 pages, \$16.95

IN AN ERA WHEN SO much effort has been directed at gaining the right to marriage for all couples, gay or straight, one might expect *Untangling the Knot* to be a somewhat academic rehash of the arguments for and against these efforts. One might also expect the book to be deadly dull. One would be wrong on both counts. Carter Sickels, the editor of this lively collection, has cast a much wider net and wound up with something far more interesting: a group of essays that explore the question of whether marriage equality is a goal on which we should be spending all our political capital and, more broadly still, how same-sex marriage stands to change GLBT culture and identity.

One of the old saws directed against marriage has always been that it leads to the loss of a person’s identity. Another is that it perpetuates traditional patriarchal values that many find repugnant. But, of course, the very notion of identity and traditional gender roles gets skewed in gay culture. For instance, Casey Plett’s “The Days of the Phoenix and the Emerald City” begins by talking about a day in 2003 “when I still thought I was a guy,” and continues to describe her personal odyssey surrounding transgender issues (a large number of these essays have to do with the transgender experience).

When a person’s identity itself is fluid and there’s no tradi-

tional assumption of gender roles, the whole debate surrounding marriage takes an interesting turn. Ben Anderson-Nathe argues that, rather than focusing so intently on gaining the right to marry, the gay movement should focus on “queering relationship[s] and family” instead. He and others in the collection maintain that many gay people have very successfully and creatively constructed new versions of what constitutes a family, and that by trying to mimic a straight version of society, we’re actually taking a step backwards. Joseph Nicholas DeFilippis laments the loss of civil unions as an alternative to marriage—a more flexible option that allowed straight people to join in.

Opponents of the marriage strategy make a legitimate point—this struggle has largely taken over the gay right movement—but most of the authors in the book see marriage equality as a powerful engine for wider advances in GLBT rights over the past decade, and even as a radical demand in itself. Thus, for example, Regina Sewell concludes the following in “Unequal Marriage”: “If we want to truly achieve equality, we have to heal the scars and change the culture that causes them. Ironically, one of the most powerful ways we can do this is by getting married. Getting married is the new coming out. It challenges us to face our scars, pushes those close to us to explore their homophobic attitudes, and normalizes our relationship to the world at large.”

Whether gay or straight, people’s sense of identity, the quality and substance of their relationships, their reasons for getting married, are as many and varied as the number of people so engaged. Sexual orientation only adds another element to the mix. This unusually entertaining and well-written collection of essays offers a wide range of 21st-century perspectives on a cluster of age-old human problems.

Dale Boyer is a writer living and working in Chicago.

The Truman Show

JEFF SOLOMON

Truman Capote: A Literary Life at the Movies

by Tison Pugh

Bantam Books. 497 pages, \$28.95

TRUMAN CAPOTE attained the kind of fame associated with a movie star or television personality rather than a writer. His familiar TV persona was that of an effeminate, outrageous, and rather bitchy gay man. His ability to achieve such notoriety against the homophobic backdrop of the 1960s and ’70s makes him an important figure in modern gay history, apart from his literary merit. Capote has recently received a mini-revival as a subject of scholarly interest.

The great virtue of *Truman Capote: A Literary Life at the Movies* is its comprehensiveness. Pugh, a medievalist who also writes on film, details the many cinematic and televised adaptations of Capote’s novels and short stories, several of which have been filmed two or three times. Pugh surveys Capote’s