

CARRY ON, UNDERSTUDIES: Theatre & Sexual Politics, by **Micheline Wandor**, (Methuen, 210 pp. \$10.95).

This is an updated revamp of Wandor's *UNDERSTUDIES* which was published in 1981. It provides us with an extensive history of feminist and gay theater in England (the emphasis being on the former, not the latter).

Wandor, being a feminist playwright herself, possesses a strong background in the history of sexually political theater. Also, because of her own writing experience, she has an exemplary writing form which allows for a fluid reading pace which neither insults the reader, nor is excessively political as to become a bore. But, *UNDERSTUDIES* is written in such a way as to make the reader question exactly how Wandor meant for it to be organized. The divisions that Wandor has created falter because of the seeming confusion as to whether or not she meant for it to be in chronological or objective order. Wandor has broken up a timescale of events from 1968 to the present into three phases, with a fourth phase (not in the first edition) of new women playwrights. The problems arise when these four chapters are interspersed with the other chapters which are not organized chronologically. A historical book need not be written necessarily in chronological form, but should be wholly organized in one form or another so as not to confuse the reader.

At any rate, once the information is processed mentally, we see a greatly detailed overview of the theater's reaction to the feminist movement (and vice versa). The extent of Wandor's knowledge of the playwrights, women's companies, workshops, and actors throughout the course of the European movement is exhaustive in detail. And she completely and competently gives

THE WINGED DANCER, (Naiad, 265 pp. \$8.95), **PAZ**, (Naiad, 326 pp. \$8.95), both by **Camarin Grae**.

Songwriters are often derided for writing only one song, then using variations on the melody to create subsequent hits. What Fleetwood Mac did with "Sara" and "Gypsy," Camarin Grae has done with her first two novels, *THE WINGED DANCER* and *PAZ*. Using the theme of personal power, its uses and abuses, Grae has produced two mystery/science fiction novels with decidedly similar protagonists, Kat Rogan and Paz. It takes a good writer to carry off the "two-books-one-plot" trick, and judging from these books, Grae is an excellent writer. What works for Grae is her style, direct and intimate.

Kat Rogan, *THE WINGED DANCER*'s heroine, is an average lesbian-feminist in Chicago, until she witnesses the murder of a Central American gentleman. Through a bizarre series of events, Kat winds up not only in Marigua, Central America, but in prison as well. In confinement, she explores (albeit unwillingly) the sado-masochism which may be inherent in all of us, given the proper circumstances, or which may be social



(Illustration from the cover)

us a view of all aspects of the theater: scripts, stagehands, audience reactions and changes brought about by the feminist movement.

One must keep in mind as they read *CARRY ON* that Wandor is herself a playwright and a critic and not simply a historian. We see from time to time that her views and opinions, or even her method of presentation, shade the content or its perception. As with any critical history, one must always be aware of the author's connotations.

CARRY ON is an excellent book for all who are involved in the theater. It makes one realize how slanted the business can be towards the "maleness" of our society and how theater perceives this machismo and responds to it.

-Jim Colony

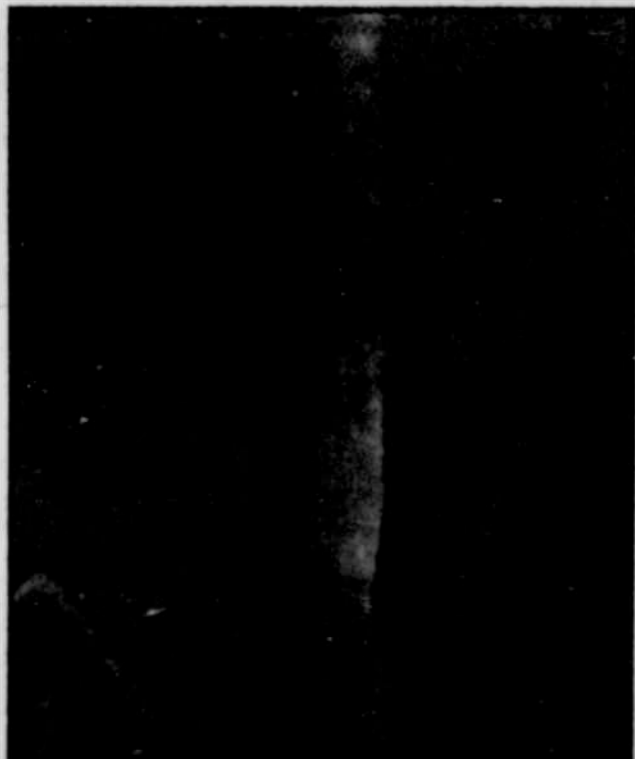
conditioning. Kat ponders these questions from the "butch" side, then soon learns what the other side is like. And, as any good mystery heroine, Kat spends plenty of time falling in love, as well as trying to solve the murder which began her on this wild journey.

PAZ's protagonist, Drew McCallister, is also primarily involved in experimenting with personal power. The victim of an unusual head injury, Drew acquires the ability to control people's minds. For the reader, this can be vicariously joyful, as when Drew convinces a would-be rapist that he is paralyzed. However, the "gift" is not so simple. Her best friend attempts to capitalize on this freak of nature, the government becomes involved in its quest for world control, and yes, the formerly-heterosexual Drew comes out. Ultimately, the courageous star, now called "Paz", for her ability to "zap" thoughts into individuals' minds, uses her abilities to create a lesbian-feminist utopia in—you guessed it—Central America. It is certainly subjective heroism, for how would readers feel if Jerry Falwell acquired the same ability? Nonetheless, MDUL/MDNM/since most of us reading this book are women-oriented, Paz's world does sound idyllic.

Many lesbian writers (and heterosexuals as well!) fall into the "all books are the same" trap, utilizing again and again the same plot, characters and theme. Grae's saving graces are her captivating style, her vivid imagination, and her ability to convince readers of the most inconceivable situations. Though Kat and Paz have similar personalities, Grae brings to each of them a different set of obstacles and surroundings, bringing new life to each page. The unique combination of mystery and science-fiction, and Grae's ability to look at political-correctness with an almost-objective eye, make both these books enjoyable beach reading (or, in winter, curl-up-by-the-fireplace reading). And although this reviewer maybe shouldn't mention this, Grae's third book, *SOUL SNATCHER*, is her second-favorite book of all time.

Whether you are on your way to Provincetown, or waiting for the mainstage concert to begin at Michigan, pick up a copy of *THE WINGED DANCER* and *PAZ*, and you'll be enthralled...or at least entertained.

-Sarah Chauncey



(Illustration from the cover)

I'M LOOKING FOR MR. RIGHT, BUT I'LL SETTLE FOR MR. RIGHT AWAY, by **Gregory Flood** (Brob House, 115 pp. \$6.95).

Many books come out every year that take lots of space and say not very much. But occasionally a work comes along that is brief and simple yet has volumes of wisdom and wit. That is the type of book Gregory Flood has put together.

"The purpose of this book (is) to give you some new ideas about yourself," writes Flood. "If this book has a message, it's simply that you are unlimited. It is your purpose in this life to establish an intelligent working relationship with life itself." This slight, 115-page book, subtitled "AIDS, True Love, the Perils of Safe Sex, and Other Spiritual Concerns of the Gay Male," does just that. It makes the reader think in an incredibly new light about all sorts of topics that come up in the daily lives of the 1980's gay person.

Most of all, this book is a positive tome on the person. Flood's message seems to be one of affirmation, of believing in your self, in

shedding the stereotypes that seem to bog down gays and living up to the real potential in all of us. That is truly a message that needs to be heard in these days of AIDS hysteria and renewed homophobic hatred.

LOOKING FOR MR. RIGHT... is written almost as a diary would be, with paragraphs that could stand alone. After each series of themed paragraphs, Flood summarizes in concise statements. Finally he writes an affirmation prayer or meditation to finish off his thoughts.

This really is a book that should be on the bedstand of every gay person. A book of clean, crisp writing that could be read in an hour, but should be savored a few minutes at a time, and thought about for hours. The world needs more counsellors and priests and politicians with the insight and compassion of Gregory Flood. Perhaps if more people read and heed his words, it will!

Hugh Shaber

HISTORICAL, LITERARY AND EROTIC ASPECTS OF LESBIANISM, edited by **Monika Kehoe** (Harrington Park Press, 181 pp. \$10.95).

As the title indicates, this book scans the spectrum. It is not, nor does it try to be, inclusive. Instead, Kehoe has chosen carefully from the best of the new lesbian scholarship. The abstracts range from Judy Grahn's superb piece on Native American culture and lesbianism to Kehoe's own report: "Lesbians Over 65: A Triply Invisible Minority," which is especially welcome since among lesbians we often encounter the ageism of larger society. Not surprisingly, it seems lesbians are more capable of adapting to old age than the average straight woman.

There are surprises, however—shockers, really. This reviewer was completely bowled over by the news that in 1696 lesbian plays were successfully produced in England. Kathryn Kendall traces one particular play from 1696 through 1858 and shows us how the once acceptable, openly lesbian theme shifts and

twists into an anti-lesbian, anti-female theme. It is worth having the book for this manuscript alone. Willa Cather fans will enjoy the articles concerning her writing and how it subtly reveals her lesbianism.

Overall, the historical and literary aspects of this book are fascinating. The sexual aspects, possibly because they were written by psychologists, were rather dull. These writers seem to love their little tables with their 6.2's and 8.8's lined up in neat little columns. I'm impressed by the work that goes into them but I was thankful only one article contained them.

Even though this entire volume is serious scholarship penned by degreed writers, most of it is vital, accessible, and thoroughly readable even to the casual student of lesbian history.

-Deborah Kachelries

DIFFERENT DAUGHTERS, by **Louise Rafkin** (Cleis Press, 154 pp. \$8.95).

Told by the mothers themselves, this is a heart warming anthology of how twenty five women were affected when their daughters came out to them as lesbians. Although their reaction varied upon first hearing the news, from disbelief to casual reception, the essence is that all of the mothers not only accepted but strongly supported their daughters choices.

A range of racial, religious, and class backgrounds are represented. Many of the stories are transcribed from interviews. One commonality shared by all twenty five respondents was the initial fear of sharing their daughters life styles with their own

peers. As each story unfolded, mothers explained how they eventually resolved that who their daughters loved didn't matter, or that it was okay not to have grandchildren. Most eventually did reach out in ways ranging from supporting others whose children had come out, to joining local parents and friends of lesbians and gays, to testifying at congressional hearings.

This book exemplifies the efforts of parents to love and accept their children, often after unfairly suffering parental guilt. The chapters are short, easy to read, and entertaining. Every lesbian should have two copies, one for herself, and one for her mom.

-Johette E. Banks

FIGHTING BACK: The Struggle for Gay Rights, by **Sabra Holbrook** (E.P. Dutton, 99 pp. \$13.95).

Sabra Holbrook's latest effort covers a whirlwind of issues facing the gay and lesbian community. Holbrook, in a short number of pages, canvases most of the highlights of the political struggles since Stonewall and the rise of the activist movement across the United States. By no means is Holbrook exhaustive in her descriptions of the struggle gays and lesbians have endured. This book, however, gives an informational starting point for individuals outside the struggle, whether they are gay or straight. *FIGHTING BACK* is, at best, an overview and perhaps a source of motivation for the reader to become involved personally in the movement.

A sympathetic author, Holbrook's touches most every area of concern to the community. She addresses the rights denied 10 percent of the citizenry because of their sexual orientation, gaining acceptance at church and school, violence, getting a job and getting promoted, surviving after being thrown out by parents, AIDS and more. Pointing out specific campaigns and neighborhood issues, such as housing and employment discrimination, Holbrook interjects issues of race and religious biases to draw some irrefutable and enlightening parallels between the gay movement and those who have fought for racial and religious equality. *FIGHTING BACK* gives an understanding of the motivation behind gay and lesbian activism and the need for this activism.



As a result of the broad generalities made concerning the whole nature of homosexuality, Holbrook may be raising as many questions as she answers. But, those questions just might be the springboard which impels some readers to educate and involve themselves beyond the parameters which *FIGHTING BACK* offers.

The greatest asset Holbrook offers in this introductory text is the positive tone in which she writes. In a non-militant and non-judgemental voice, Holbrook views the activism of the gay and lesbian community and applauds the courage and resourcefulness she discovers. *FIGHTING BACK* is a valuable primer for anyone who wants to understand the activism of the gay and lesbian community.

-Will Guilliams