

**MORE REVIEWS**

**FINDING THE REAL ME: TRUE TALES OF SEX AND GENDER DIVERSITY**

edited by Tracie O'Keefe and Katrina Fox; Jossey-Bass, 2003; \$17.95 softcover

As the awareness and visibility of those whose gender identity and presentation vary from the hegemonic system has increased throughout the past decade, so has the tendency to seek an explanation for this variance. *Finding the Real Me* is a collection of essays that speak to the human experience of sex and gender queer lives.

Rather than attempting to analyze or pathologize these personal narratives, editors Tracie O'Keefe and Katrina Fox allow the essays to stand on their own merits as individual truths. By removing frameworks of analysis and inviting the reader to engage without judgment, the rich truth and beauty of each story shines powerfully through.

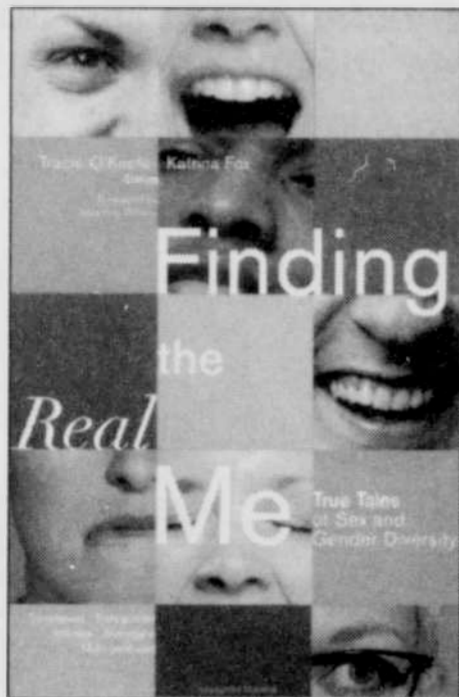
It is also refreshing to see a collection on sex and gender that includes views and cultural perspectives outside the Western paradigm. The broad representation of identities blended with international and intercultural perspectives contributes to the understanding of individual and social factors on identity formation. The foreword by Stephen Whittle provides an excellent historical context through which to understand the ever-changing social roles of the sex and gender system.

—Eric Plemons

**BLOOD BROTHERS**

by Michael Schiefelbein; Alyson Publications, 2002; \$13.95 softcover

Certain pieces of popular culture are so lurid, so over the top, they work beautifully; more is more in the sex- and violence-drenched films of Brian De Palma or the wonderfully tasteless music of The Cramps, for instance.



Michael Schiefelbein's second novel (the first was *Vampire Vow*) should qualify as just that sort of accomplished trashiness.

The overcomplicated, excessive (what else?) story is about a sort of *homme fatale*—a Spanish man dashingly named Juan Ramon, who has gone to great lengths to become a priest for the sole purpose of getting to Bernardo, a young monk aspiring to the priesthood. Bernardo is the son of the man who engineered the vicious murder of Ramon's parents; the priest has a vague plan to kill or

otherwise ruin the only son of the man who killed them.

Once he does track Bernardo down, however, Ramon is distracted from his purely revenge-calibrated machinations by the fact that the targeted offspring is hot. The feeling is mutual.

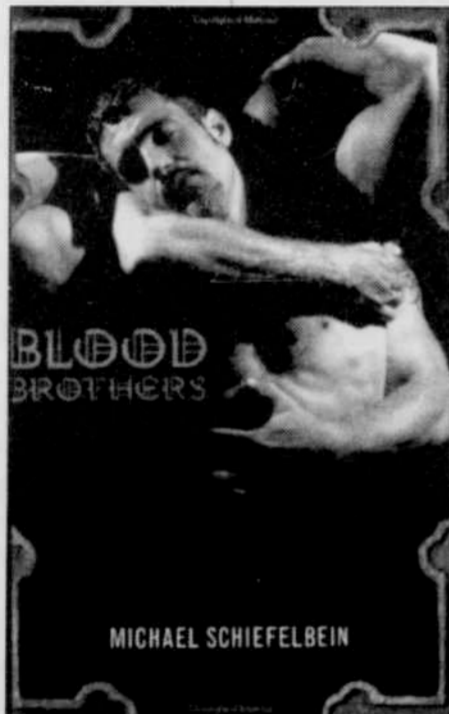
They begin, of course, a torrid affair. Will the crazy, wild sex and their growing emotional attachment be the downfall of Ramon's ruthless scheme and Bernardo's carefully cultivated piety?

Unfortunately, this isn't as fun as it sounds. Schiefelbein's eroticism is hilariously overwrought and fairly sexy, but he fails to embrace the naughty humor. The tone ranges from depressive to cranky, with extraneous theology and architecture lessons as well as fake blasphemy that fails to be truly, entertainingly offensive and that is more than a little self-serious, as if readers will be picking up

*Blood Brothers* (which features porn star Colton Ford in its steamy cover photo) based on educational value.

There are tiny glimmers of what could have been, but most is more along the lines of grim, boring Cinemax soft-core. The subject matter is base, the premise simplistic; this could've been a compliment had Schiefelbein stayed true to that spirit. He didn't, and the pages don't turn—they drag.

—Christopher McQuain



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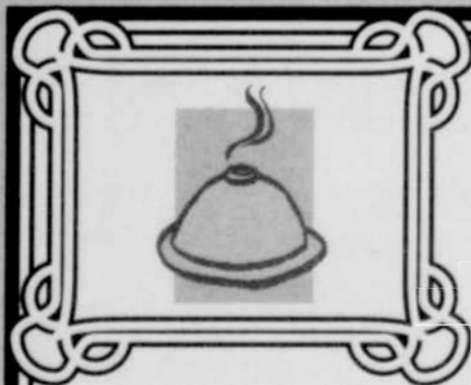
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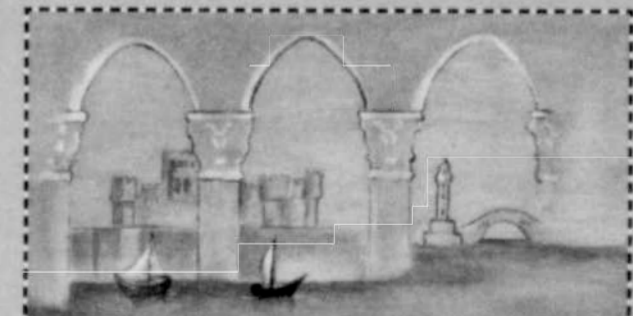
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