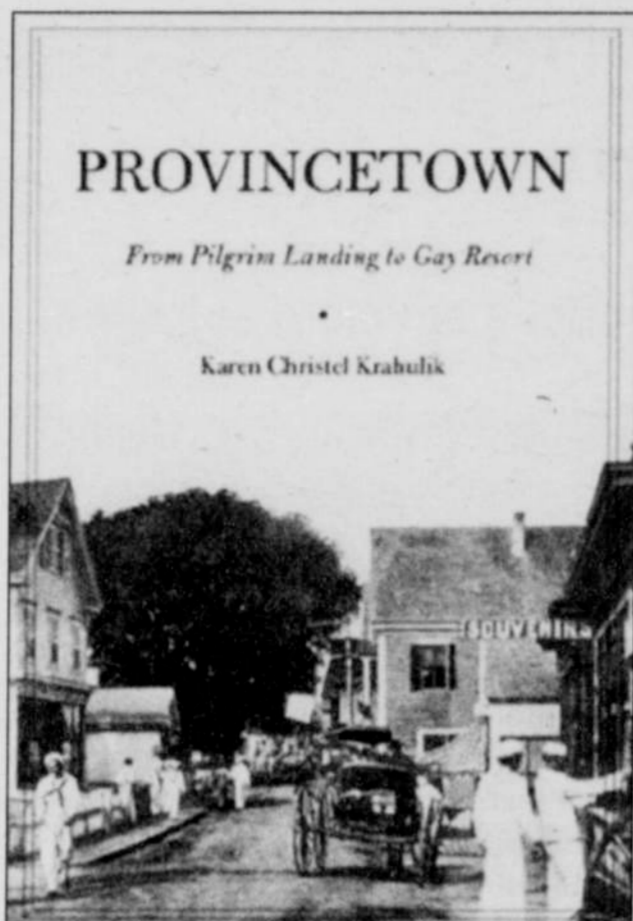


and authors as anything else, that uses queer history as a springboard for the author's wild experiments in style. Twenty-four pages are taken up with an epic poem by "Vilja de Tanguay, male actress." Another section corrals a ton of alleged drag queen quotes. Strewn throughout are long movie reviews that include detailed opinions from other critics.


Here's the opening few sentences of a typical paragraph: "On the Road to Manhood-Delayed definitely indefinitely. Forsaking all other ambitions than digging it. Instead, every time I'd look out the Scenicruiser's window, I'd see road for the sake of road and torment myself with fantasies of Jack, trying when they became overbearing, to float in my mind the Russian steppes, another plentitude of Nothing, hard to dig, but negotiable." Hard to dig indeed. This incomprehensible, crazy-quilt effect brought *Queer Street* some good reviews from the lit establishment, which eats up such pretentious stuff. But *The New York Times'* assessment that the book "takes your breath away" is accurate in a way it might not have intended. The reader might feel literally asphyxiated by this tidal wave of "sensibility" that ultimately is about little more than the author and his private interests.

A more inviting (certainly more intelligible) read is *Provincetown: From Pilgrim Landing to Gay Resort* (New York University Press, 2007; \$18.95 softcover). Karen Christel Krahulik has extensively researched the history of this gay enclave, interviewing locals and delving deeply into the archive. The result is a fascinating portrait of a town in a more or less constant transition, from its early Pilgrim landing days through the arrival of Portuguese sailors to its status as a Yankee vacation spot to its present incarnation (which started many decades ago) as one of a handful of instantly identifiable gay enclaves.

Provincetown is most exciting when it moves into its homo phase, with Krahulik amusingly recounting the chaotic intermingling of Portuguese locals and Yankee bluebloods with horny sailors, lesbian shopkeepers and drag queens cavorting through the streets by day and into the sand dunes



for a wild tryst by night. The book traces the ongoing push for visibility, particularly by the queens, and the inevitable pushback by offended straights who feared "the boys" would corrupt their children. As often as not, good sense and a realization of economic realities—the gay populace tended to be successful in business—trumped narrow-mindedness, and the fags and dykes carried on. This tug-of-war filigrees the narrative, with religious zealots popping up periodically to drive out the queers. (No doubt the sign one brazen queen erected reading "Legalize Butt-Fucking!" helped encourage the Jesus freaks.)

The book is also a welcome reminder that the cliché of gay men and lesbians at odds is often only a cliché. While there were times of disconnect between the two, just as often they got along fine, collaborating in businesses and joining hands to create a model of responsiveness to AIDS that was copied throughout the country. *Provincetown* is a rich history of a modest seaport that queer folk have helped make vibrant and fun during even the most troubled times. 

GARY MORRIS edits and publishes *Bright Lights Film Journal*, located online at www.brightlightsfilm.com.

You Go, Girls

Different Daughters: A History of the Daughters of Bilitis and the Rise of the Lesbian Rights Movement (Carroll & Graf, 2006; \$25.95 hardcover) is an enjoyable book about a group of San Francisco women who came together in 1955. They were looking for a way to meet other lesbians in a safe environment, but years later the club grew into national organization handling major issues such as legal and civil rights.

Marcia M. Gallo carefully blends the history of DOB with the rise of the lesbian movement as well as the rise of the general gay rights movement. However, her book is at its best when she concentrates on the women who joined DOB and when she discusses the history of its publication, *The Ladder*.

Gallo spent many hours interviewing various DOB members, and it shows in her writing as she carefully describes their backgrounds and personalities. Throughout the book, she follows the story of Phyllis Lyon and Del Martin from their early days with DOB to their historic 2004 wedding in San Francisco. But she also introduces the reader to lesser-known members such as Natalie Lando, who painstakingly typed *The Ladder* on her "cranky old Underwood."

The first issue of *The Ladder* was published in October 1956. Gallo maintains the publication "marked DOB as a group committed not only to socializing but to social change." Some of the early issues contained heated debates about lesbian pulp fiction, with their flashy covers and tragic endings. Members disagreed with the way lesbians were represented in those novels. They thought *The Ladder* was doing a far better job of improving the self-image and respect for lesbians. In 1970, a few members removed *The Ladder* from the protection of DOB and began publishing it themselves. Gallo writes of the magazine, "Like a good film noir story, it started with a murder and ended with a theft." She is careful to present both sides of the story and lets the reader determine if the publication was stolen or saved.

This is a book well worth adding to your library of lesbian history.

—Pat Young



BAD DATES

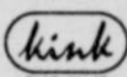
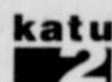
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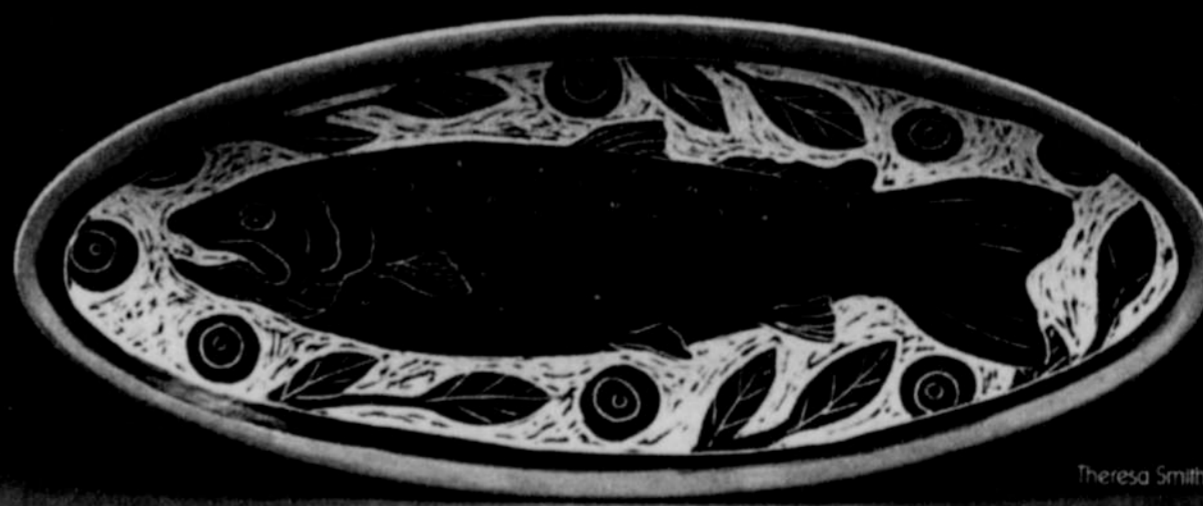
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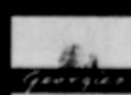
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