

Did you know that hearing aids are a tax write-off?



- Hearing Tests
- Hearing Aids
- Custom Ear Plugs and more!

**pacificaudiologyclinic**

5010 NE 33rd Avenue  
Portland, OR 97211  
503-284-1906  
www.pacoregon.com

where the queers go to hear!

wisdom  
compassion  
loving kindness

**DHARMA RAIN ZEN CENTER**  
2539 Southeast Madison, Portland, OR 97214  
503 239 4846 www.dharma-rain.org

**POSITIVE LIVING with HIV & AIDS**

A SEVEN WEEK WORKSHOP FOR PEOPLE LIVING WITH HIV

CONTACT JULIA AT OHSU/PARTNERSHIP PROJECT 503-230-1202 FOR MORE INFORMATION ON UPCOMING WORKSHOPS

**JOURNEY**  
KOINONIA  
CATHOLIC COMMUNITY

FAITH • JUSTICE • COMMUNITY  
All are welcome at our table!

**EASTER VIGIL**  
Sat., Mar. 22nd at 8pm

St. Stephen's  
1432 SW Clay • Portland  
www.journey-catholic.org

# THE ESSENCE OF *Gay Spirituality*

ACCLAIMED AUTHOR BELIEVES WE POSSESS THE ABILITY TO LEAD SOCIETY'S NEXT PHASE OF CULTURAL REVOLUTION

BY GEORGE WINBORN

**A**ccclaimed writer, photographer and former *Advocate* editor Mark Thompson came to Portland this month to discuss his traveling exhibition of photographs, *Fellow Travelers*, which is on display at Q Center. He accompanied his longtime partner, spiritual writer and former Episcopalian priest Malcolm Boyd, who read from his latest satirical story collection, *Samuel Joseph for President*.

Thompson has written or edited three books on gay spirituality: *Gay Spirit*, *Gay Soul* and *Gay Body*. During a recent interview, he said: "It's been my life work to try to figure out [the essential characteristics] of being a gay man. There are some unifying cultural roles that we seem to do...which led me to the archetypal."

Through impressive, probing interviews with leading gay poets, activists, psychologists, historians and artists as well as a candid account of his own life story, Thompson has uncovered the archetypes, myths and stories that form the essence of gay spirituality. (For the record, Thompson has only worked on uncovering the archetypes of gay men. He says he doesn't feel qualified, as a gay

*Soul*: "Gay men...need to awaken to the freedom of their inner world as much as the outer. For I believe [we] possess the ability to lead society's next phase of cultural revolution—liberating of the soul—if only [we] realize that potential." He also believes, "The gay spiritual movement is the most healthy way to go forward."

## THE GAY WOUND

Everyone carries scars from traumatic past experiences. How we react to these experiences forms much of our personalities and views on life. What Thompson points out is that there's a specific wound that all gay men share. "We've been deeply damaged; we've been cut off from our families, from being healthy," he says. "We've been cared for, but often emotionally abandoned."

Why are gay men rejected? Around age 4 or 5, during the Oedipal phase, where straight boys transfer the love for the mother to another feminine source, "Where does ours go?" asks Thompson. "To the masculine source." The straight father, often subconsciously, sees this aberration and rejects his son. Sometimes this leads to the mother becoming more nurturing and supportive of her son; other times it leads to the mother emo-

yourself and others, and by catching your projections...grab them before they hurt someone else. Take them back and examine them and acknowledge them as part of the shadow of your wound. Don't fling it on someone else."

As Thompson writes, our wound is an initiation, a gift. It is meant to temper us and make us stronger. It's the call to action to work on ourselves from the inside out.

"The work of gay liberation," says Thompson, "has to be an inside-out job. All these things are going on inside us...liberation of self, self-awareness...having the capacity for self-love, to accept oneself...to say, 'I'm going to not just survive, but thrive.'" In other words, it's our duty to transform our wound into self-love.

## REFLECTING NARCISSUS

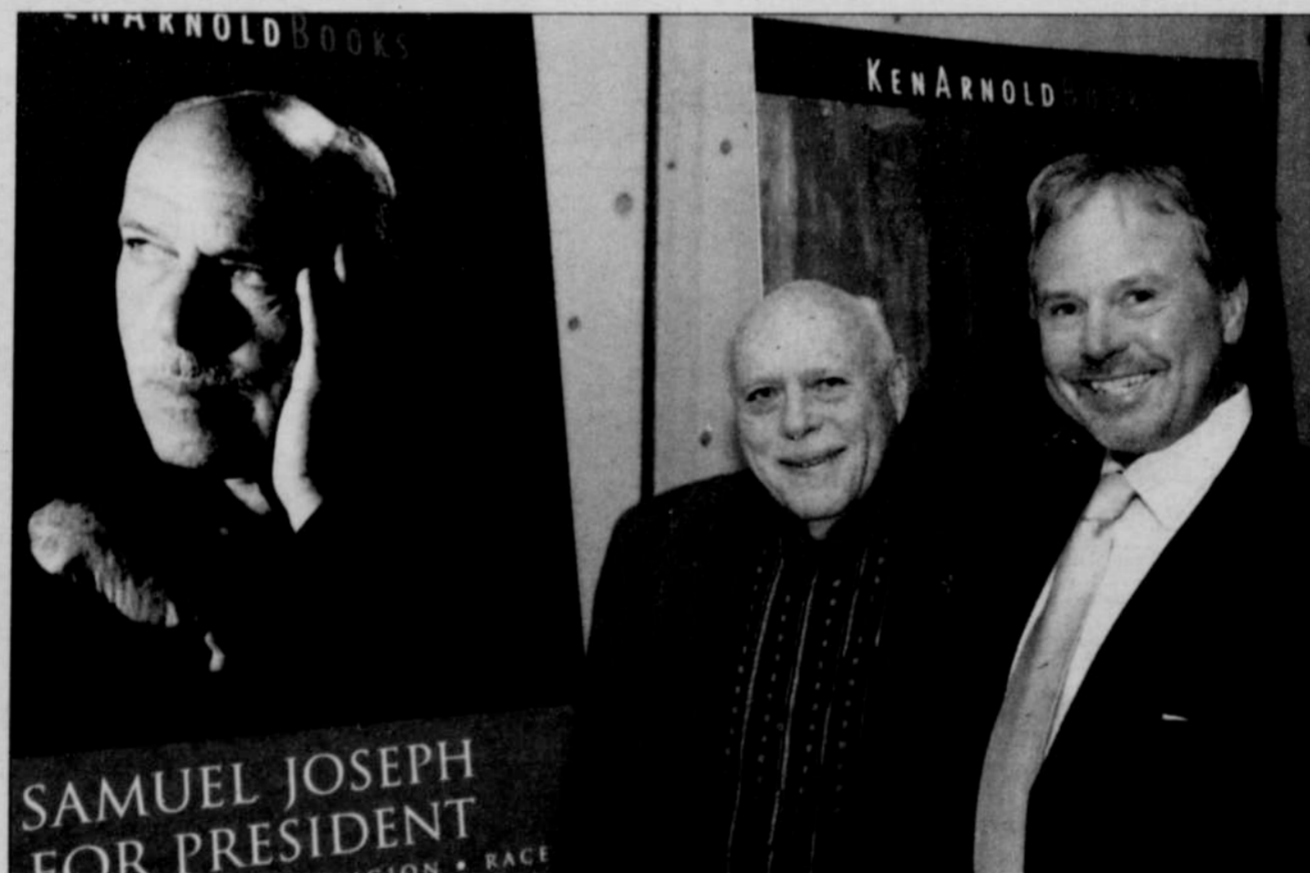
The myth of Narcissus tells the story of a man who rebuffs offers of love from his many admirers and instead falls in love with his own image in a pool. Stricken with grief that he could not reach the depths of love for his own image, he falls into the pool and drowns.

We see the Narcissus story enacted among us when the haughty queen prepares for a public appearance, creating "some idealized person...an image of someone else," Thompson writes in *Gay Body*. Or in our own need to primp in front of the mirror to "bolster and rearrange a flawed self-image by will." We re-enact the dilemma of Narcissus whenever we "attempt to possess the self through a reflection of self."

Thompson goes on to show how gay men, "who've been deficiently mirrored by parents and society in their youthful years, have nothing but their own reflection to confirm existence." When we're cut off by neglect, or homophobia, our "authentic self is not affirmed," so whoever's inside us must not really exist. To attempt to retrieve our true selves means having to accept the damage and despair of the past. It's a tough place to be. According to Thompson, "Gay men live Narcissus' myth each time we try to cover up our own intrinsic insecurity with behavior that's contemptuous of others."

The effects of Narcissus spread beyond this, too. A lifetime of being devalued can lead to feeling hopeless, unworthy of love or, once it arrives, suspicious of love; to being unable to accept a compliment for accomplishments; to needing to be the center of attention—all are signs of Narcissus' presence in our lives. Thompson adds, "Covering up the pain, and the rage born of it, is Narcissus' biggest talent of all." Once again, only when we learn to own the dark sides of our souls can we know the true love of self.

From their expertise in all things Narcissus, many gay men excel in helping others create and project their own image. From fashion designers to hair stylists, graphic designers and PR mavens, where there's an allure of idealized perception, there you will find a son of Narcissus.



Mark Thompson (right) celebrates the release of partner Malcolm Boyd's latest satirical story collection, *Samuel Joseph for President*, during a reception March 3 at the Heathman Hotel. The couple will be honored with lifetime achievement awards from Lambda Literary Foundation on May 29 in Los Angeles.

man, to tell the stories of our lesbian sisters.)

As Thompson writes, myths are the way the psyche speaks to itself. Unlike the stories and parables of the Bible or other texts, myths exist outside of any time or place. Myths tell the essential truths of the human experience. So when you uncover the relevant symbolic significance of a myth, you can enact its wisdom in your everyday life. Once you find your story in the lives of the archetypes, you can use them as your guide to understand, and ultimately rearrange, your thoughts and behaviors.

Thompson says in the introduction to *Gay*

tionally distancing herself from her son.

Either way, this withdrawal of love and support from one or both parents leads to low self-esteem in gay boys. When compounded by rejection from peers, this low self-esteem can morph into active self-loathing. This wound can take years to overcome. While it's being overcome, it's the source of many sad stories within our community, from bitchy repartee to suicide.

This wound, though, doesn't have to end as a sad story. Thompson says: "You go through the wound, you acknowledge it, and you keep on going. By self-examination, by being honest with

KIMBERLI RANSOM PHOTOGRAPHY