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Author

Rupp, Leila J

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The Gay Revolution: The Story of the Struggle. By Lillian Faderman. New York: Simon & Schuster, 2015. Pp. 794. \$35.00 (cloth).

The Gay Revolution is a prodigiously researched account of the gay and lesbian movement from the emergence of homophile activism to the recent victories in the areas of military policy and marriage equality. Faderman begins the book with a striking contrast between the 1948 arrest on sodomy charges of E.K. Johnston, a much-loved journalism professor at the University of Missouri, and the ceremony in 2012 elevating Tammy Smith to the rank of brigadier general with her wife by her side. It is a moving contrast that foreshadows the tale Faderman tells of the “long-fought battles, tragic losses, and hard-won triumphs” that brought us from there to here (xvii). This hefty volume takes us from the homophile movement to pre-Stonewall protests to Stonewall and the emergence of gay liberation and lesbian feminism to the culture wars with the anti-gay New Right to the AIDS struggle to the fight over military service to the legal battles against sodomy laws and workplace discrimination to marriage equality activism, ending with a consideration of “what remains to be done” before gays, lesbians, bisexuals, and transgender people “will truly be first-class citizens” (xvii). Along the way, we encounter the struggles within the movement, primarily between radicals and assimilationists.

As the opening vignettes illustrate, it is Faderman’s telling of the stories of individual lives that most distinguishes this book, both from the existing works that focus on one or another phase of activism and Marc Stein’s comprehensive analysis of the movement.¹ Faderman mined archives, oral histories, arrest records, court cases, and the contemporary media, and topped it all off with her own extensive interviews with a wide variety of individuals, some famous, some less known. People’s lives and struggles fill the pages of the book. The chapter that leads off her discussion of gay and lesbian activists targeting the Democratic National Convention in 1972, for example, begins with Bruce Voeller, “six feet tall, with a scraggly white-blond beard and

ponytail,” looking “at first glance like a radical.” Faderman adds: “He was not,” (249), and tells of Voeller first contacting George McGovern, who promised he would make sure “homosexually oriented individuals” received first-class citizenship, then organizing a planning meeting in an unheated Chicago church, and launching the fight for recognition within the Democratic Party (250). Faderman tells great stories, with a novelist’s flair.

These strengths—the exhaustive narrative, the mobilization of stories—have a downside as well. The wealth of detail on every phase of activism can be overwhelming. What people were doing and thinking sometimes carries us away from what is, fundamentally, a social movement story. For example, Frank Kameny and Barbara Gittings take center stage in the homophile movement section, Kameny “fairly banging out his annoyance on the typewriter keys” (158) in a letter lecturing Clifford Norton, a NASA employee entrapped by the police who hesitated to come out publicly, and Gittings sharing his “single-mindedness” and “conviction that they were right and the world must be made to see it” (145). Kameny “liked to think of himself as the Father of the gay civil rights movement; eventually he would call Barbara Gittings its Mother” (145). At the same time, Faderman reminds us that the Mattachine Society had very few members. But it is important to remember that the actions of individuals, no matter how heroic, would not have made the same difference without a movement behind them.

It is also the case that, while many of the details are new, the overall arc of the story is well known from the work of a host of historians, beginning with John D’Emilio.² The more than 250 pages of notes give some acknowledgement to existing work, but they are more a guide to the primary sources and a means of providing additional information than a way to track the contributions of others. That will, of course, matter little to general readers interested in learning the history of the movement.

Because this is a “story of the struggle,” as the subtitle puts it, and so begins at the end of the Second World War, The Gay Revolution reinforces the picture of triumphal progress from the

bad old days to a world in which Tammy Smith's wife stand beside her as she is promoted, despite the ups and down along the way and the acknowledgement of remaining challenges. Not that such progress is anything less than remarkable. But as George Chauncey and a host of other historians have pointed out, the trajectory of queer history beyond the movement is more complicated than light dawning over the dark ages.³ Nevertheless, as we witness the backlash to the marriage equality victory and confront continuing violence against transgender people, especially people of color—Laverne Cox and Caitlyn Jenner notwithstanding—it is good to be reminded that “the arc of the moral universe has been bending toward justice” (635). Faderman, a powerful story teller, has given us that.

1 Marc Stein, Rethinking the Gay and Lesbian Movement (New York: Routledge, 2012).

2 John D'Emilio, Sexual Politics, Sexual Communities: The Making of a Homosexual Minority in the United States, 1940-1970 (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1983).

3 George Chauncey, Jr., Gay New York: Gender, Urban Culture, and the Making of the Gay Male World, 1890-1940 (New York: Basic Books, 1995).

Leila J. Rupp

University of California, Santa Barbara