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## Between the Covers

### British boys find joy

*While England Sleeps*  
by David Leavitt  
Viking Press, NY  
\$22.00 304 pages

by Jonathan Padget  
Special to Q-Notes

Popular author David Leavitt, who's works include *Family Dancing* and *The Lost Language of Cranes*, has returned to the literary scene with a moving tale of love across British class barriers in *While England Sleeps*. The situation Leavitt establishes in his new novel is not unfamiliar to many readers: Intelligent, witty, generally dashing young upper-class Englishman struggles to find stable emotional pathway for his homosexuality in a cruel, rigid class structure. You've already met Leavitt's primary character, Brian Botsford (or at least a very close likeness), in literary works like E.M. Forster's *Maurice*, Christopher Isherwood's *Berlin Stories*, or films like *Another Country*.

Brian is a struggling writer (of course) in 1936 London whose attempts to focus on a successful life are thwarted by the death of his mother, his Aunt Constance's constant badgering to set him up with a nice young girl, and his own insistent desires for men that find their most frequent release by "cottaging—" or pursuing illicit liaisons in London's public bathrooms. Brian's focus finds its greatest challenge, though, when he attends a Communist Party meeting (popular among the friends in his "smart set") and meets Edward, an idealistic, informally educated subway worker with a quiet understanding and acceptance of his own homosexuality. So, after boy meets boy, you have boy moving in with boy, boy freaking out and pursuing girl — thus breaking other boy's heart, and boy realizing the error of his ways and trying to get the other boy back. Only this time, the brokenhearted boy, Edward, has fled the scene (to fight in the republican forces in civil war-torn Spain, to be specific);

and the caddish boy, Brian, must risk his conventional stability to save the remains of his glimpses of true ecstasy — glimpses that are shattering in the face of fascism's staggering rise in late 1930s Europe.

Save a few unique twists here and there, the story's not too unusual. The characters are not extremely complex, particularly Brian and Edward, who come across in Leavitt's hands as two handsome, squeaky clean WASPs with sex drives and physical endowments that are quite at home in this realm of "fiction." So, does Leavitt's tale deserve a read? Reservedly, "yes;" and it's mostly due to the fact that Leavitt seems to really believe in his characters and their plight — even when the situations border and cross into the realm of melodrama. But beyond the melodrama also lies a real lyricism that comes through too infrequently — but it's there — in places you might not expect it. You'd think that in romanticizing a period like 1930s Europe with a gay theme, Leavitt would take the liberty of empowering Brian and Edward's speech with poetic intimacy. But he doesn't. Brian and Edward, perhaps in a more realistic portrayal of their society, stumble in an effort to communicate their feelings, and they speak most fluently in the raw energy of the sexual act. But when describing things such as the tunnels of London's underground rail system or ocean water that evokes Brian's memory of his journey with Edward back from Spain, Leavitt takes full command of his language and wields it like a weapon of emotional war.

*While England Sleeps* should be worthy of most readers' literary leisure time. Enjoy the vision of an early 20th century gay love story told from a late 20th century perspective and be grateful that unlike Forster, whose mixed-class male lovers in *Maurice* don't make it any further than their love nest on a boathouse floor (or stable, or something like that), Leavitt is at least willing to send his lovers out to face and fight the world — even at the bittersweet expense of a happy ending.

### Escort Ring

Continued from page 1

were four movies being filmed here and we had clients at all four, from the boom operators all the way up to the actors," Hincemon mused.

*"I'm tired of these straight, married men using me for sex..."*

After he arrived in Hollywood and started working for Fleiss' company, Hincemon developed a loose personal relationship with the owner herself. "I wasn't her right-hand man or anything, but I would see her at parties and things. But, you have to remember that I had no idea who Heidi really was. I had no idea that she would become such a huge figure. I just worked for her."

Hincemon stayed in California until last

October when he was summarily forced to return to Charlotte to give a deposition against Holliday. He has remained in the area since then, but will be returning to the West Coast after the trial. He has now been subpoenaed to give a deposition against Fleiss.

In the short time that he has been back in Charlotte, Hincemon has created a minor stir by threatening to reveal the names of prominent city officials whom he claims patronized PMA. When asked why he would divulge such information, Hincemon said, "They're just as guilty as I am. I'm tired of these 'straight,' married men using me for sex and then acting like they don't know me when I need them for something."

Hincemon stated that in the future he hoped to open a legitimate business and put his dealings with Fleiss and Holliday behind him.

Q-Notes attempted to reach Holliday for his comments on the charges, Fleiss and Hincemon, but several calls to his Atlanta business went unanswered.

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