

# BEST SELLERS

December 1994

Local authors Kevin DiLallo and Jack Krumholtz top the men's list again this month with their ridiculously successful *Unofficial Gay Manual*, which was number one — by a wide margin — at every bookstore polled. Meanwhile, Mabel Maney's parodies of the fabled Nancy Drew mysteries are looking like the beginnings of a successful franchise; the most recent, called *The Case of the Good-For-Nothing Girlfriend*, jumps onto our list in the number one slot.

## WOMEN'S BOOKS

1. [-] *The Case of the Good-For-Nothing Girlfriend*, by Mabel Maney (Cleis Press, trade paperback, \$10.95). Nancy Clue and Cherry Aimless, R.N. set out to clear housekeeper Hannah Gruel of murder charges
2. [-] *Painted Moon*, by Karin Kallmaker (Naiad Press, trade paperback, \$9.95). An architect and a famous artist find love in a snowbound cabin
3. [2] *Body Guard*, by Claire McNab (Naiad Press, trade paperback, \$9.95). The sixth mystery for Australian sleuth Carol Ashton
4. [3] *Serving in Silence*, by Margarethe Cammermeyer (Viking, clothbound, \$22.95). The story of a decorated Vietnam vet who came out
5. [10] *Hollywood Lesbians*, by Boze Hadleigh (Barricade Books, clothbound, \$21.95). Interviews with Moorehead, Stanwyck, and more
6. [9] *Divine Victim*, by Mary Wings (Plume, trade paperback, \$9.95). An inheritance comes with ghostly strings attached
7. [1] *Venus Envy*, by Rita Mae Brown (Bantam, trade paperback, \$5.99). Coming-out comedy set in Charlottesville
8. [-] *Murder at Monticello*, by Rita Mae Brown (Bantam, clothbound, \$19.95). Troubles begin when Harry and her pets look into a 200-year-old murder
9. [-] *The Penguin Book of Lesbian Short Stories*, ed. by Margaret Reynolds (Penguin, trade paperback, \$13.95). Great brief fiction by and for Lesbians
10. [4] *The Total Zone*, by Martina Navratilova and Liz Nickles (Villard, clothbound, \$21). Mystery on the tennis courts



## MEN'S BOOKS



1. [1] *The Unofficial Gay Manual*, by Kevin DiLallo and Jack Krumholtz (Doubleday, trade paperback, \$12.50). How to be a stereotype on \$100,000 a year
2. [-] *B-Boy Blues*, by James Earl Hardy (Alyson, trade paperback, \$9.95). "Girlfriendz" in the hood
3. [5] *Men on Men 5*, ed. by David Bergman (Plume, trade paperback, \$11.95). New short fiction by and for Gay men
4. [2] *The Folding Star*, by Alan Hollinghurst (Pantheon, clothbound, \$24). A love story after James and Mann
5. [-] *Out in America*, by Michael Goff and the staff of *Out* magazine (Viking Studio Books, clothbound, \$34.95). A day "in the Life" of America
6. [3] *What the Bible Really Says About Homosexuality*, by Daniel Helminiak (Alamo Square, trade paperback, \$9.95). Examining Scripture vis à vis Gay lives
7. [7] *Glamourpuss*, by Christian McLaughlin (Dutton, clothbound, \$19.95). The adventures of a semi-closeted soap star
8. [-] *Queer and Loathing: Rants and Raves of a Raging AIDS Clone*, by David B. Feinberg (Viking, clothbound, \$22.95). Polemics and raillery on AIDS and Gay politics
9. [-] *Dead On Your Feet*, by Grant Michaels (St. Martin's, trade paperback, \$8.95). Boston hairdresser/sleuth Stan Kravchik gets his fingers into another messy do
10. [-] *The Penguin Book of Gay Short Stories*, ed. by David Leavitt and Mark Mitchell (Penguin, trade paperback, \$13.95). The editors' somewhat narrow-minded notion of what's best in Gay fiction

Numbers in [brackets] indicate last month's ranking. A dash (-) means the book was not included in last month's list.

This month's best sellers list reflects the best-selling books at the following stores: Lambda Rising (Washington, D.C./Baltimore/Rehoboth Beach, Del.), Lammas Women's Books and More (D.C./Baltimore), A Different Light (New York/San Francisco/West Hollywood), Oscar Wilde Memorial Bookshop (N.Y.), Glad Day Bookshop (Boston), New Words (Cambridge, Mass.), Giovanni's Room (Philadelphia), Sisterhood Bookstore (Los Angeles), Outwrite Bookstore and Coffeehouse (Atlanta), Crossroads Market (Dallas and Houston), Liberty Books (Austin, Tx.), Common Language (Ann Arbor, Mich.), A Brother's Touch (Minneapolis), People Like Us (Chicago), Unabridged Books (Chicago), and White Rabbit Books (Raleigh and Greensboro, N.C.).

—Trey Graham

# John Boswell Remembered

By Dr. Robert Goss

The *Boston Globe* ran the obituary of Dr. John Boswell, who died two days before Christmas due to complications of HIV. My reaction consisted of dismay, anger, and sorrow. Another wonderful person and tremendous gay scholar has fallen to this plague. How many more will fall to HIV? I said a prayer for John Boswell, for his lover, family, and friends. I prayed in thanksgiving for what he gave me and other queer Christians. His scholarship has empowered other gay/lesbian scholars, theologians, clergy, and Christians to reclaim a history for themselves.

I remember a recent conversation at a Christmas party with a Jesuit priest who had been at the Gregorian University in Rome. Some American Jesuit, he said, had faxed sections of Boswell's latest book, *Same-sex Unions in Premodern Europe*, to professors at the Gregorian. The Jesuit priest had recounted how a few professors attacked the premises of Boswell's book on a liturgical rite blessing same-sex unions. Their catty comments focused on his supposedly "loose" translations of certain Greek terms and the impossibility of the Greek churches blessing same-sex unions. The priest reminded the Gregorian professors that Boswell was a brilliant medieval historian from Harvard University and now Chair of the Department of Medieval Studies at Yale University. When reminded of this fact, one professor remarked that Boswell was justifying his homosexual lifestyle in his book and that he had AIDS. Both remarks intended to dismiss Boswell's work! These comments will certainly not be the last to dismiss the threat of Boswell's scholarship.

From my own years as Jesuit, I found that Jesuit recreation room banter was often as catty as any group of drag queens "reading" one another. That last statement is more revealing about Jesuit recreation rooms than about drag queens. In the particular case of a pontifical university such as the Gregorian, professors are very Eurocentric and dis-

missive of American scholarship; they are misogynistic and obviously homophobic. They cannot conceive of history outside of the intellectual blinders from which they read or misread it. For example, they have consistently deny the fact that women were priests in early Christianity. They would not certainly admit the existence of a liturgical rite that blessed same-sex unions.

John Boswell has made significant contributions to the gay and lesbian community. He has spoken on a number of occasions to various gay/lesbian Christian groups, national conferences, and conventions. Though I have met Boswell and have heard him speak on several occasions, I will limit

my remarks to his scholarly accomplishments for the gay and lesbian community. John Boswell was a brilliant linguist, a virtual polymath of classical, medieval, and contemporary languages. He was an excellent historian, immersed in social sciences and anthropology. Significantly, Boswell used his talent for history for gays and lesbians to reclaim our past.

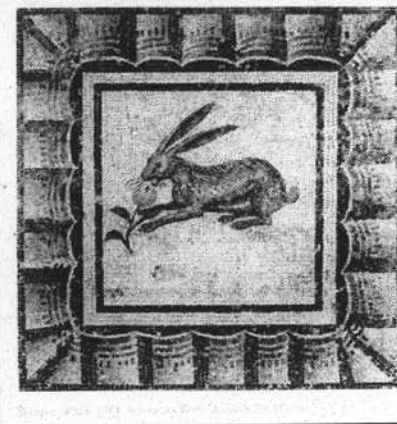
Boswell's *Christianity, Social Tolerance, and Homosexuality* was hailed one of the ten best books in 1980, and the *New York Times Book Review* described Boswell as "a major historian." His book, furthermore, won the American Book Award for History. His work is written with an attention to historical detail and scholarly erudition, delighting historians and the educated reader with a host of substantive and fascinating footnotes. Boswell's book challenged the contemporary ignorance about the history of

Christianity and homosexuality. He presented an alternative history overlooked by scholarly blinders and prejudice. His work has been debated for more than a decade by biblical scholars, historians, and theologians. Boswell has made significant in-roads in the theological academy and is cited regularly in the footnotes of prominent Christian theologians. He has changed the way that theologians view the history of Christianity and Christians with same-sex attractions.

continued on page 15

## Christianity, Social Tolerance, and Homosexuality

John Boswell



# Two Books for Gay Christians

*What the Bible Really Says about Homosexuality* by Daniel A. Helminiak. Alamo Square Press. Paperback, \$9.00

Reviewed by Dr. Robert Goss

With *What the Bible Really Says about Homosexuality*, Dan Helminiak has made a significant contribution to the queer community. He examines the supposed texts of terror in the Bible that are used against us and digests the latest scholarly research on those scriptural texts. On a number of occasions, I lectured on the issue of the Bible and homosexuality for concerned queer Christians, university students, and churches. Dan's book provides a condensed and readable travel guide through the biblical texts that are frequently cited against us for those who never had the opportunity of taking a biblical course using informed historical-critical and literary methods.

Reading a scriptural verse or story literally and out of its narrative context (failing to look either at the verses or chapters before and after) is frequently practiced by the religious right. Such readings lead to misreadings of the scriptures. Dan Helminiak notes that literal reading differs from historical-critical reading of texts. Historical-critical reading of biblical texts requires long study of archeology, history, languages, anthropology, and minute analysis of words and texts. When we examine the texts frequently applied to gays and lesbians through the lens of historical-criticism, we find out that the Bible can no longer be used to condemn homosexuals. The Bible takes no direct stand on homogenital acts nor on the morality of gay and lesbian relationships. Only through faulty (or homophobic) translations and misreadings

can one condemn homosexuality.

I have two minor problems with Dan Helminiak's treatment of Paul. He makes a statement "Lesbianism was not a major topic of knowledge or discussion in the Greco-Roman world." He needs to look at the work of Bernadette Brooten, a lesbian biblical scholar who has written on the subject and is

close to finishing a major work on female homoeroticism in the ancient world and early Christianity. Paul had a problem with female homoerotic acts because it violated the Jewish gender/holiness codes that understood a woman as subordinate to her husband. For Paul, having sex with another woman was to become male, violating or confusing the gen-

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## What the Bible Really Says About Homosexuality

Daniel A. Helminiak, Ph.D.

Foreword by John S. Spong, Episcopal Bishop of Newark, N.J.