

Shilts, whose unreliable *And the Band Played On* is positively cited—and a few creative writers, such as Larry Kramer, another of the handful of authors mentioned.

The reality was and is more complex. Edmund White's revelatory travel narrative *States of Desire: Travels in Gay America* (1980, based on columns written for *Christopher Street*), may have been, in Paul Cowan's dismissive review for *The New York Times*, "a journey through promiscuous, all-male America—a desolate place to live." The present-day consensus, however, surely supports us reading White's book as a groundbreaking endeavor: arguably, a work that created its own subgenre. Questions of religious belief, class, age, education, employment, politics, prejudice, regionality, social values, and family all play leading roles in it. But, of course, White's interlocutors were for the most part sexually active gay men.

Downs seems to have a problem with sex. He argues that, "According to the logic of sexual promiscuity as the cause of HIV, it makes more sense [for others] to portray gay people at a disco than in a church pew, in a crowded bathhouse than at an ordination ceremony." One knows what he's getting at—and yet... The most moving scenes in AIDS narratives were, as I recall, set precisely among church pews. Norman René's moving film *Longtime Companion* (1989) deftly took us from a '70s Fire Island boardwalk to St. Vincent's, and then, in seconds, from a hospital to a funeral service.

Downs' own material too tells of the improbable and fascinating plurality of GLBT lives in the liberation period. Moments after the quotation above, he approvingly quotes one Larry Bernier, a gay Bostonian who became an MCC minister without renouncing his erotic feelings one bit: "There is no conflict for me in worshipping Jesus at service and then running out and sucking cocks at the Fenway." Equally, one thinks, some gay men who attended the Continental Baths truly wanted to hear Bette Midler sing or Barry Manilow play. As the Divine Miss M herself said, "I feel like I was at the forefront of the gay liberation movement, and I hope I did my part to help it move forward. So, I kind of wear the label of 'Bathroom Betty' with pride." Personal and social histories are always complex and diverse. Thus, Downs legitimately argues against prejudiced reporting when he notes of the 32 arson victims: "These people were not lascivious or lewd." At the same time, I cannot help asking: what difference would it make if they were?

Chapter three, perhaps the most substantive and moving, narrates the determination of a retail ingénue, Craig Rodwell, to found a gay bookstore in Greenwich Village: both to enable literary and cultural discussion and networking and, equally, simply to stock the sorts of titles people came to Manhattan looking for. And the Oscar Wilde Memorial Bookshop was born. Downs' account—drawing on Rodwell's papers at the New York Public Library—offers both information and inspiration. Wrote Rodwell back in the '70s: "I am not a bookseller businessman. I am a person who at the age of 13 set out to help change the world and primarily Gay people's self-images."

Another "forgotten" niche was advocacy for gay and les-

## Short Story

When Tobey decided that Martin,  
whom he had waited for so trustingly,  
was unlikely ever to return  
he locked the front door and unplugged the landline.  
Shaking, he stumbled to his bedroom  
to drop onto the mattress on the floor  
and hug Max very close.

Max, a borzoi whose white hair curled like hyacinths,  
felt hour-long Tobey's strong clutches and wetting sobs.  
Looking often at his master, seldom glancing away  
or attempting to struggle to his paws,  
Max bore as almost always  
whatever, unable to gauge when  
and whether closeness ends.

JONATHAN BRACKER

bian prison inmates (including from the MCC), notably efforts to encourage them to express themselves in verse. This is indeed an overlooked story, and a fascinating one. But again, Downs' thirst for a strong narrative overtakes him. He concludes that by the late '70s such collective initiatives were doomed, as "many gay people became more obsessed with themselves than with others or with their community. ... New forums for community and cultural expression would begin to lose out as being gay became strongly connected to a particular—and barely attainable—body type for gay men." One wonders, if he thought the '80s narcissistic, what must Downs make of our contemporary world, with our digitalized lives, sex-focused websites, selfies, and social media?

A final chapter called "Body Language" pursues the myth of the perfectible gay clone in earnest. There is, however, the sense of a straitjacket being placed over what was a more diverse reality. The signature gay music group of the era, the Village People, made a point of emphasizing diversity through the various ethnic and occupational roles of its members. And the clone look was also resisted and ridiculed by at least as many gay or bi men as aspired to it. Some looked to Tom of Finland, others to Joe Brainard or Klaus Nomi.

*Stand By Me* is an uneven but diverting book with considerable virtues. Downs points to real opportunities for other social and cultural historians in the field, focusing on neglected archival resources. Its emphasis on the everyday and the somewhat overlooked (rather than "forgotten") experience is a virtue, though the author ought to have resisted the lure of the bold headline or singular "narrative arc." We were never only this or that, and most GLBT figures who made a difference aren't entirely lost to us—or entirely remembered. As Downs himself notes in an atypical moment: "Gay people rethought the meaning of homosexuality in the 1970s, and their words, their language, and their ideas were often too sophisticated to be reduced to a catchy slogan on a sign at a pride parade." 

A short story is a fully developed story which is shorter than a novel and longer than a fable. It typically takes just a single sitting for reading. Short Story focuses on the incidents bigger or smaller and evokes strong feelings from its readers. A short story often has a few characters in the plot. Features of a Short Story. Example #1. The Happy Prince by Oscar Wilde. The Happy Prince is one of the best stories written in English Literature written by Oscar Wilde. The story shows how the elites of that kingdom neglect the poor. Short Stories in English for your kindle, tablet, IPAD, PC or mobile phone. Download for free the best Short Stories in english. At Your Age, a 1929 short story published in the Saturday Evening Post, contains all the trademark elements that F. Scott Fitzgerald's readers had come to expect by the end of the Jazz Age. At fifty, Tom is attracted as much to Annie Lorry's age as to her beauty or social status. Short story, brief fictional prose narrative that is shorter than a novel and that usually deals with only a few characters. The short story is usually concerned with a single effect conveyed in only one or a few significant episodes or scenes. Learn more about short stories in this article. { "541698": { "url": "/art/short-story", "shareUrl": "https://www.britannica.com/art/short-story", "title": "Short story", "documentGroup": "TOPIC PAGINATED LARGE" , "gaExtraDimensions": {"3": "false"} } }. Contents.