

On Christopher Street: Life, Sex, and Death after Stonewall

Michael Denny

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Michael Denny's memoir-in-essays *On Christopher Street* illuminates various aspects of gay life in the past half-century.

Denny spent much of the 1970s, 1980s, and 1990s writing and publishing on subjects of interest to gay readers. This volume samples from the commentaries, essays, and interviews he published during this seminal period in queer history. Many of the entries first appeared in *Christopher Street*, the literary magazine that he cofounded.

The book's primary focus is the state of the burgeoning gay literary scene and its public and critical reception. In preserving articles as they appeared at the time, the book revives the atmosphere, hopes, fears, ambitions, and challenges of the nascent community, as experienced by Denny as a gay man living and working in New York. It also exposes the flawed, underdeveloped personal perspectives that Denny spent subsequent years grappling with and refining. Denny contextualizes each forceful, unapologetic piece with a brief preface explaining how and where it was published and covering what was happening in his life at the time.

Covering the unrestrained joy and sexuality of the 1970s; the urgency, anger, and grief sparked by the AIDS crisis in the 1980s and 1990s; and the reflection and reassessment of priorities and values in the 2000s and beyond, the book encapsulates its particular eras well. Denny notes that much has changed in the decades since he first began publishing, but says that it is essential to remember what was; doing so ensures that the hard work upon which advances such as marriage equality and queer representation in media are built do not fade into history.

The personal essays collected in *On Christopher Street* chronicle the rise and evolution of the contemporary gay rights movement in the United States.

EILEEN GONZALEZ (May / June 2023)

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