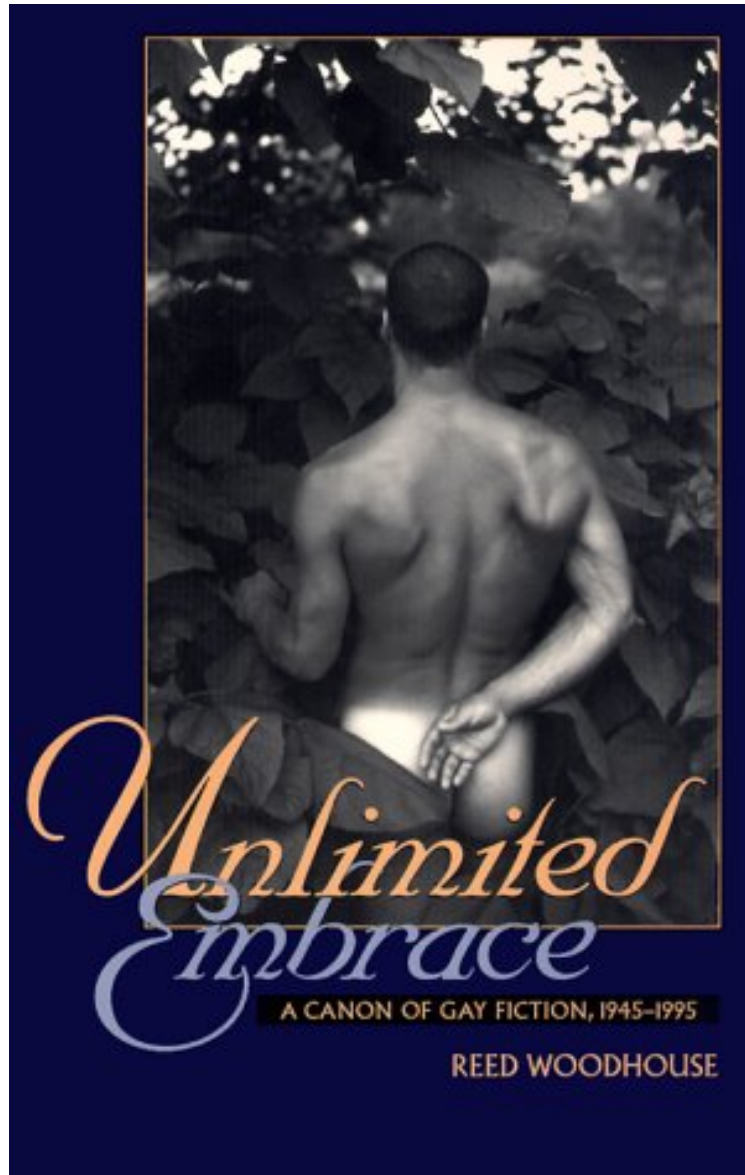


(Download free pdf) Unlimited Embrace: A Canon of Gay Fiction, 1945-1995

Unlimited Embrace: A Canon of Gay Fiction, 1945-1995

Charlotte Sheedy

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Charlotte Sheedy : Unlimited Embrace: A Canon of Gay Fiction, 1945-1995 before purchasing it in order to gage whether or not it would be worth my time, and all praised Unlimited Embrace: A Canon of Gay Fiction, 1945-1995:

2 of 2 people found the following review helpful. literary criticism with a personal touchBy A CustomerThe acid test of a book like this is whether or not you can disagree with some of the author's opinions but still want to keep reading, and Woodhouse succeeds just fine at passing this test. The openly personal nature of his readings of the texts he

chooses excuses the leaving-out of so much (for instance, a gay "canon" with nothing about Gordon Merrick?), and the author's articulateness makes me hope he'll write a sequel.³ of 4 people found the following review helpful. Flat-out Brilliant
By A Customer
This book not only offers incredible insight into the work of gay fiction writers, it offers brilliant observations about what it's like to live life as a gay man. Woodhouse's ideas are original, compelling, and dead-on. My only reservation is that too few readers will be brave or intelligent enough to take Woodhouse's ideas and observations and apply them to their own lives. That's where they belong.² of 3 people found the following review helpful. Don't Miss It
By A Customer
One of the more engaging and refreshing studies of its type, though not without its controversial readings of the literature, much of which is not as insightful as this.

In this pathbreaking book, a gay literary critic evaluates a half-century of fictional works "by, for, and about" homosexual men and situates them in the context of an emerging American gay culture. Reed Woodhouse shows how the best gay fiction of the period, like all good literature, not only reflected but anticipated social changes that were afoot from the founding of the first enduring gay rights organizations through the Stonewall riots to the ambiguous mainstreaming of homosexuality that continues today. Written in a personal voice, *Unlimited Embrace* is as much about gay identity as about gay literature. The canon Woodhouse constructs is not merely a list of gay books worth reading, but a guide to "leading a good life as a gay man" as well. In the fiction of Tennessee Williams, James Baldwin, Christopher Isherwood, James Purdy, Edmund White, Andrew Holleran, Larry Kramer, Ethan Mordden, Dennis Cooper, David Leavitt, and Neil Bartlett, Woodhouse finds intimate glimpses of lives previously veiled in euphemism, slander, and contempt and now striving to take new form. More than that, he raises questions about sexual identity and desire, defiance and wit, that are as relevant to straight readers as to gay ones. Although the book ends with a sober consideration of the literary legacy of AIDS, *Unlimited Embrace* is more celebration than lamentation—a affirmation of the enduring power of literature to shape life.

.com While gay male literary criticism abounds, much of it is based in the academy and uses the critical perceptions of postmodernism and queer theory to elucidate both popular and literary work. In this context, Reed Woodhouse's *Unlimited Embrace* shines out like a beacon. Covering work from the 1950s (James Baldwin's *Giovanni's Room* and the short stories of Tennessee Williams) to contemporary novels such as Dennis Cooper's *Frisk* and Dale Peck's *Martin and John*, Woodhouse attempts to create a cohesive tapestry out of diverse, imaginative styles, attitudes, and intentions. Such a project is fraught with difficulty, and Woodhouse is careful not to misrepresent or misread specific works to make them fit his theories. The best part of *Unlimited Embrace* is the author's own exuberance, excitement, and enmity to individual works. Like the film critic Pauline Kael—known for her sharp intelligence and even sharper tongue—Woodhouse is unafraid to venture opinions when he knows they are idiosyncratic or even contrary to "accepted" opinion. Whether praising Dennis Cooper's transgressive narratives over David Leavitt's assimilationist novels, or preferring Samuel Delany's perversely brilliant *The Mad Man* over Stephen McCauley's popular *The Object of My Affection*, Woodhouse makes his cases with flair and panache and will delight and infuriate even the most stolid lover of literature. --Michael Bronski
From *Library Journal*
This stunningly good book is an example of literary criticism of the old style—an arguments for what is good and not so good? applied to a field that, although in its infancy, has suffered from a surfeit of theory and a dearth of true criticism. With barely a trace of the recent academic jargon, Woodhouse (English, MIT) combines extraordinary erudition with a personal style in arguing for works that "are central to the project of gay (male) fiction in the postwar period." Although his range of literary reference is extraordinary, his choices for a canon are based as much on subject and political stance as style. He divides gay fiction, loosely, into works that represent or depict assimilation and those (which he clearly prefers) that embody a distinctive gay identity. His canon, therefore, includes Boyd McDonald as well as Edmund White but excludes David Leavitt (a "nice narcissist" whose fiction exhibits "a generalized fear of experience"). Woodhouse's close and extremely perceptive readings of works by White, Isherwood, Andrew Holleran, Gore Vidal, Larry Kramer, and many more need to be read by anyone with a serious interest in American gay male literature. For all graduate and upper-level undergraduate collections.
?Robert W. Melton, Univ. of Kansas, Lawrence
Copyright 1998 Reed Business Information, Inc. "Woodhouse is a first-rate literary critic of the old school of the sort I feared had become extinct from breathing the exhaust fumes of poststructuralism. In fact, he reminds me a bit of Edmund Wilson (I do not make this comparison lightly) in his shrewd book sense and his sparkling prose style."
John W. Crowley, editor of *Genteel Pagan: The Double Life of Charles Warren Stoddard*
"One of those rare works of literary criticism that is itself a work of literature."
David Bergman, author of *Gaiety Transfigured: Gay Self-Representation in American Literature*