

Bad Gays: A Homosexual History

Huw Lemmey

Ben Miller

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Huw Lemmey and Ben Miller's *Bad Gays* is about prominent historical queer figures whose "evilness" is often overlooked when discussing the history of queer politics, and whose queerness is often overlooked when discussing the history of "evil" politics.

Going in chronological order, starting with the cruel Emperor Hadrian whose decisions were often driven by his love for young men, and ending with Pim Fortuyn, the Dutch politician whose racist contributions to the cultural landscape of the Netherlands have been forgotten in favor of honoring his liberal gayness, *Bad Gays* covers a range of contexts within which "bad gays" existed and zeitgeists that "bad gays" have defined. Every chapter examines the complex relations between an individual and the wider historical events taking place around them through an unapologetic contemporary lens (a reference to Roger Casement as a "size queen" can be found).

Bad Gays refrains from stopping at the obvious answers to the complications it raises. When writing about people like Roy Cohn and J. Edgar Hoover, who have been subject to extensive research already, or Philip Johnson, the architect whose Glass House is an obvious metaphor for contemporaneous queer existence, *Bad Gays* manages to bring something new to the table by insisting on focusing not on how a certain identity can coexist with its evil antithesis of oppressive actions, but rather on how queer sensibilities interweave with power relations and the choices people make regarding their power. That is the thesis at the core of the book. To understand the "bad gays" of history is to understand how to choose a contemporary queer movement that stands as all-inclusive and in solidarity with its counterparts.

Bad Gays is an account of historical privileges and marginalizations, as well as a theory of queerness for the future.

MICHAEL ELIAS (May / June 2022)

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