ForeWord Reviews

TRAVEL

Big Trips: More Good Gay Travel Writing
Raphael Kadushin
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A follow-up to the well-received *Wonderlands: Good Gay Travel Writing* also edited by Raphael Kadushin *Big Trips* doesn't suffer from sequel-itis that peculiar malady that can strike a sec-ond volume of a strong anthology. Rather than throwing together more essays to satisfy demand Kadushin mixes a beguiling collection of fiction and nonfiction with subjects that explore the globe and just for good measure he brings together well-known authors like Dale Peck Edmund White and even playwright Martin Sherman with up-and-coming writers.

What they all have in common is an understanding of travel as a catalyst either for rollicking adventure deep introspection or even homesickness. Kadushin an acquisitions editor at the University of Wisconsin Press states some forceful and compelling opinions from the outset and his articulated views shed light on why the pieces were chosen and how they fit together.

Travel writing has become a mundane series of lists he believes like the "Top 10 Hotels" or travel tips that cull tourist must-see spots. The travel narrative has begun to lose the kind of gorgeous sense of otherness that compels so many to sojourn to unfamiliar environments. The reason for blending the work of gay authors he posits is that they're so adept at reading the social subtleties of alien lands. "[G]rowing up gay still means that even your hometown is a slightly foreign unforgiving coun-try" Kadushin writes. "And that in turn means every queer kid becomes a patient ethnographer who has to read his culture closely and decode the most subtle social signs like a seasoned traveler if he is going to stay safe."

For the authors in *Big Trips* this skill is obvious. There are many standouts in the collection which is divided into two distinct sections: "Going Out" covers journeys of exuberance and hope in which narrators see the world fresh; and "Coming Back" details the type of restless search for roots and home the flipside of adventure. For example in Trebor Healey's fictional "Saint Andy" a man is in the midst of bringing his lover's ashes across the United States from San Francisco through the Cascade Mountains and finally to New York. The story takes place in one extended scene at a small town diner where he makes casual conversation that

doesn’t match the grief and rage in his mind. It’s as if he’s on two trips simultaneously and the intersections can be powerful. By contrast Dale Peck provides an extended riff on the clubs in London and his breathless stream-of-consciousness style captures the kind of hyper-awareness that excited travelers can feel.

Other pieces explore Corfu Rome Cairo Florida and encompass the work of thoughtful playful and well-versed travelers who know enough to look inward as they detail the landscapes they’re seeing.

Elizabeth Millard