ForeWord Reviews

LGBT

Legacies of Love: A Heritage of Queer Bonding
Winston Wilde
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Like so many important research efforts, *Legendary Love* began with a passion for the truth. Author Winston Wilde recalls watching the TV show *Hawaii Five*-0* as a teen and being struck by how "the gay guys were always portrayed as loners, child molesters, humiliated perverts, and slimy criminals." The situation was exacerbated when his mother, in graduate school at the time, told him that she'd learned during a psychology class that homosexuals were sick and crazy.

On his way toward becoming a psychotherapist and sexologist, Wilde decided to embark on a quest to uncover stories of same-sex love, in part to prove those professors wrong, to create a book that would be a "gift to queer people, of all ages and identities," and to show them that no matter what lies they were taught, gay people have always loved, and always will.

It's an impressive effort—part reference book, and part celebrity tell-all—*Legendary Love* is a collection of very short takes on more than a hundred relationships by the likes of Oscar Wilde, Margaret Mead, Leonardo da Vinci, Alexander the Great, Eleanor Roosevelt, and Mary Wollstonecraft.

Wilde organizes the fragments according to a scheme he calls "pattern of love." For example, the section on intergenerational love includes liaisons between people who have ten years or greater difference in age. "Overlapping love" is defined as a romantic relationship of two or more people, in which one or both partners acquire additional partners while still with the primary romantic partner.

Some of the book's strongest passages are those that go into detail about a relationship, or include a bit of writing by the person being profiled. For instance, the passage on James Baldwin includes his comments on meeting a young runaway, Lucien Happersberger, and swooning over his realization for the first time that love "was not merely a general human possibility…it was among *my* possibilities."

Those looking for in-depth exploration, though, may be disappointed: in many cases, Wilde simply includes details of the lovers' lives, and then a line about the length of the relationship, or what biographers may have written. But even though these lack detail, the

overall effect of the volume is to give a stunning breadth to the range of same-sex love, and Wilde's gift is likely to help many overcome the *Hawaii Five*-0* effect and see gay love for what it is—well-established, complex, and important.

Elizabeth Millard