

The Missing Myth: A New Vision of Same-Sex Love

Gilles Herrada

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“Homosexuality is an honor and a gift,” writes biologist Gilles Herrada, PhD, in a book which seeks to afford gay communities both historical closure and self-understanding. Both are critical to helping homosexuals metamorphose “into authentic and responsible actors in history,” he asserts, which may also address the lethargy of identity embodied by younger generations. Herrada says that the ingredient required for this corrective alchemy is deceptively simple: we need to connect homosexuality to a more honest etiology.

Herrada’s work is split into three parts, representing “it,” “we,” and “I.” These categories help to contextualize homosexuality both as it is lived and as it has been treated historically. Herrada first explores homosexuality as “it” is: as an evolutionary reality. Homosexuality is behaviorally present in myriad species, he shows, and its presence in primates serves an important developmental function. The same benefits existed in societies prior to the advent of monotheism, which reimagined the world and its connection to the divine, and summarily villainized sexual expression without procreative, order-driven aims.

The exploration of that unfortunate social transformation comprises Herrada’s “we,” or cultural and historical, section. He shows that the myths which run beneath our cultural consciousness were made to support a “proper” sexuality, one centered around a nuclear family. Burdened by these irruptive notions, human beings, even homosexual human beings, gradually lost the ability to understand homosexual lives as either normal or natural.

Though modern societies are moving away from decrying homosexuality as deviant or wrong, centuries of denying gay communities a constructive mythos of their own have their lingering implications. As such, in the final section, Herrada encourages developing a healthy homosexual “I.”

Myth-making possibilities are mentioned, ways of redirecting cultural consciousness to once again embrace homosexuality as a positive quality. Such work constitutes an undoing of pervasive negative tropes which render gay people aberrant or marginal. Instead, we could re-arrive at a general awareness that many sexualities exist, naturally and harmoniously, and that those who embody them have always played integral roles in the human story. The notion that homosexual expression might offer some didactic hints for all sexual beings, when it comes to deepening love and intimacy, concludes the work.

Herrada writes with the authority and erudition of a true scholar, yet his work is also eminently approachable. His use of sympathetic cultural illustrations helps to illuminate even dense scientific explorations. He’s honest regarding innate limitations, particularly regarding prospective audiences. For example, lesbianism wasn’t a prominent factor in many of the cultures he discusses, so historical reclamation is most effective for the mythos of homosexual males. This may mean that his most significant chapters will be more applicable for some than others.

Nevertheless, the project is intent on introducing meaning and purpose to a subject that is too frequently denied both, even by important queer theorists. Searing and significant, *The Missing Myth* goes beyond mere quests for equality to laud the unique historicity and contributions of homosexual people. For this, it deserves a prominent place in contemporary gay studies and conversations.

MICHELLE ANNE SCHINGLER (March 11, 2013)

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