

Your Nostalgia Is Killing Me

John Weir

Red Hen Press (Apr 26, 2022)

Softcover \$16.95 (224pp)

978-1-63628-029-5

John Weir's short story collection reflects upon being a "cisgender gay white guy" from the 1970s to the present, through decades of liberation, devastation, and gradual progress.

Narrated like a memoir, the stories begin in a New Jersey childhood: the boy is subjected to constant bullying. His teachers even attempt a "reclamation project," coaching him on how to walk, talk, and think in a less "effeminate" manner. At his 1976 high school graduation, however, homophobic yells still issue from the crowd as he accepts his diploma.

The young man finds a more welcoming and vibrant community when he moves to New York, but gay communities are still not accepted in much of the US. AIDS further ostracizes and endangers gay men, and the disease claims the life of the man's close friend, Dave. Dave's death is recounted in harrowing detail, with his body deteriorating into a "huddle of bones under sacked skin."

The man's other relationships are explored, too: long-term, intimate involvements alternate with anonymous and intense encounters. He also takes part in ACT UP and Queer Nation ambush protests, demanding improved and immediate AIDS treatment and challenging homophobia.

The book's underlying anguish is enlivened by its deft, piercing humor. In junior high school, the boy wears a scarf with "Mick Jagger at Altamont" flair, until fellow students try to strangle him with his fashion statement. And before his illness, Dave throws an all "David Party," extending invitations to Davids Bowie and Letterman, serving David's Cookies, and showing Richard Gere's *King David* on the VCR.

With insight, eloquence, and wit, *Your Nostalgia Is Killing Me* refocuses the lens of memory. Most reboots and reimaginings may evoke retro fashions and music, but the true voices of the times come from those, like Weir, who survived the not-so-distant past.

MEG NOLA (May / June 2022)

Disclosure: This article is not an endorsement, but a review. The publisher of this book provided free copies of the book to have their book reviewed by a professional reviewer. No fee was paid by the publisher for this review. Foreword Reviews only recommends books that we love. Foreword Magazine, Inc. is disclosing this in accordance with the Federal Trade Commission's 16 CFR, Part 255.