

Between the Covers

Cruising, The Lure: The Novel of Death

by Rich Grzesiak

by Mitzel

Mitzel and Rich Grzesiak are switching columns this issue only.

For what reasons are homosexual men regularly targeted for murder? If you read the several books published in the past year which hang plots on gay murders, you'll get plenty of false clues but no understanding.

Murders of gay men (murdered because of being homosexual) are central to *Dress Grey* (just out in paperback), *Cruising* (reissued in paperback), *A Queer Kind of Death* (reissued), Felice Picano's *The Lure* and, of course, Wm. Friedkin's own screenplay for his \$11 million movie of *Cruising*. I've read the shooting script of "Cruising" and want to include it in this round-up since the film opens (in saturation bookings) on February 15 and poses a threat to our public safety.

In *The Lure*, a number of gay men "on the circuit" in NYC's bar-discobath scene are murdered in brutal fashions. A straight college prof is recruited by police to go underground in the gay ghetto and finger the malefactors. He learns to "be gay." The plot takes him on the rounds—tending bar in a back-room bang joint, rubbing bellies with top-line gay movers 'n shakers, orgy baths, Fire Island, etc. Though police speculate that a homophobic queer-basher is the killer, this turns out to be only partly true. Homophobia in this entertaining novel plays second fiddle to greed and political corruption. At least Picano provides credible motivation and assumes that, in such a world as he describes, gay men are killed by homophobic psychos.

Billy Friedkin's "Cruising" has some remarkable parallels to *The Lure*. Picano has even observed in his *Advocate* interview that he

suspects Friedkin of plundering galleys of *The Lure* during Friedkin's mad rewrites of "Cruising" in the midst of the gay rebellion in NYC this past summer. One scene I suspect Friedkin literally lifted from *The Lure* occurs when straight-man-posing-as-undercover-gay is confronted by his female lover (left behind while he's On Assignment) who believes he is now actually homo and implores him To Be Honest About It With Her. The overall milieu of the movie "Cruising" is shared by *The Lure*—fuck bars, peep shows, Christopher Street clones, which were not around as institutions 10 years ago when the book *Cruising* first appeared. It was Dorothy Parker who said: "The only -ism they subscribe to in Hollywood is plagiarism."

Steve Burns, the cop-character played by Al Pacino in the film "Cruising," is a rookie flatfoot assigned to find the "chop-killer." Shortly thereafter he does, with about as much detective work as, say, Lucy and Ethel all adizy over a misplaced birthday card. The Friedkin script provides no motive as to why the killer is selecting gay men as victims. He is simply another American "lone nut" with unresolved Oedipal problems. This makes for simplified screenwriting (flat characters, cheap TV cop-talk dialogue, no motivation for action) but it's certainly further evidence of Friedkin's greed to exploit an extremely important concern of homosexuals (our physical safety) for box-office sensationalism without promoting any understanding of why we are being killed.

Never in *The Lure* or in "Cruising" is someone killed by a homophobic Christian screaming "This

is for Anita" or "Kill A Queer For Christ," though this happens in our community. When daily headlines tell of politically-inspired anti-gay assassinations (Robert Hillsborough, Richard Heakin, Harvey Milk, Robert Opel, et al), gayexplo pop media don't want to offend their straight market with such a disturbing and critical truth. Never is a gay guy in these works attacked and beaten (as was Dick Button) by a gang of streetcorner thugs with baseball bats out "to kill a fag." Instead we are told that certain men kill queers because they are politically corrupt, are being paid to do it or have personal problems.

Friedkin is far more culpable than Picano in this matter. He has exploited a dangerous misrepresentation of how gay men in NYC live, and the wide distribution of Friedkin's lies can only result in further increasing the assaults on homosexuals.

The biggest lie in "Cruising" is that homosexuals cannot and will not protect themselves. Our "choices" of hedonism and lifestylism make us acceptable marks for death. Our only salvation is the police who, as in "Cruising," want to kill us too, given the opportunity. We are despicable and deserve to die, so sez Billy Friedkin's script.

Picano is far more sophisticated. His homosexuals are organizing to oppose right-wing movements and police malfeasance. But their power comes from wealth and business persuasiveness. Money talks louder than the love that no longer dares not speak its name.

The wonderful irony here is that rioting by thousands of faggots in NYC during the "Cruising" shoot-

(Continued on page 17)

ON FEBRUARY 15, 1980 C R U I S I N G WILL OPEN IN THE UNITED STATES AND CANADA



A "Cruising" ad—the movie "shows every simple-minded homophobe How To Kill A Fag."

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PARENTS OF GAYS

A support group of parents of lesbians and gay men has finally been formed in Philadelphia to help parents understand and accept their gay children. Philadelphia area parents of gays meet at 2:00 p.m. on the third Sunday of each month at the Gay News Office, 233 South 13th Street. However, January's meeting will be held a week earlier, on January 13th at 2:00 p.m. Parents, lesbians, gay men, and their families and friends are all welcome. Researchers have estimated that there are 20 million lesbians and gay men in the United States. That means they have 40 million parents. Unfortunately, many of these parents do not know that their children are gay. Publications from the National Gay Task Force and a list of recommended books will soon be available about homosexuality. There are no fees, no dues (though contributions are welcomed), and you don't have to join anything. Just come. Our mailing address is 233 South 13th Street, Phila., Pa. 19107.

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**Novel of death
—The Lure
and Cruising**

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ing exposes the harmful lies of these fictions: a) homosexuals are interested in their safety and will organize to insure it, and b) like with Stonewall, it will be street gays and "the little people" who will put themselves on the line first—not the bankers, account execs, and property developers.

The Lure is a fanciful concept, stylishly executed (as you'd expect from a craftsman like Picano) and has little to do with our reality. I read it as such. The world the book depicts is a fantasy to me in that it has more to do with The Money Ghetto than The Gay Ghetto.

Friedkin's script for "Cruising" is a different kettle of fish. All the horrible things you've heard about it are true. The final version of the movie will probably be even worse than we can expect. "Cruising" shows every simple-minded homophobe How To Kill A Fag. It exploits our lives and advertises our condition as fatal. It invites reactionary violence against us. By coming out, according to Friedkin, we must passively accept our own murder. The film implicitly endorses crimes against us and goes out of its way to demonstrate that we have no redress. It can only encourage anti-gay violence.

If you or someone you know is beaten, robbed, attacked, threatened or harassed while "Cruising" is screening in your area, don't bother to ask the names of the perpetrators. I can answer that for you right now: "It's Billy Friedkin whodunit."

**Williamsport
activist
hounded by
homophobes**

(Continued from page 4)

had spoken several times to Sergeant Wilson, although Wilson denied having heard of him.

The future of HOW is unclear, according to Maneval. "I'm going to maintain a very low profile for quite awhile, and I don't know what's going to happen to the group."

He said the attacks on his home have hurt the group's membership attendance which at one point was 25 people. "The members have seen what happened to me, and have all gone back into the closet. We have literally no organization left because of this."

Nevertheless, Maneval said he is going ahead with plans for the organization's next scheduled meeting on Wednesday, January 2. For more information on the group, Maneval said to write to HOW c/o P.O. Box 1072, Williamsport, Pa. 17701.

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"Gaynews." Philadelphia Gay News, vol. 4, no. 5, Dec. 28, 1979-Jan. 10, 1980, p. [1]. Archives of Sexuality and Gender, <https://link.gale.com/apps/doc/REVMIB524278205/AHSI?u=livuni&sid=AHSI&xid=f8f8b908>. Accessed 18 June 2020.