

YOUR SOUL BONE IS CONNECTED TO YOUR THIGH BONE

*Author celebrates re-discovery of sex
and its role in being fully queer*

by Brent Ingram

Sex Between Men:

An intimate history of the sex lives of gay men postwar to present

by Doug Sadownick

HarperCollins

This is a book about gay male sex, lots of it, and our many values and codes of conduct. Doug Sadownick is a journalist turned psychotherapist who has turned boy talk into an art form.

This rite of passage into the world of sexual healing is based on hundreds of conversations about desire, sex, and community in the Age of AIDS. *Sex Between Men* is a playful and powerful chronicle of how gay men in North America have connected erotically over the last half century. Sadownick reflects on the fact that "half of the time has been spent in ecstatic experimentation; the other half in recovery and depression."

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Sex Between Men is about "trying to put the sex—and the feelings around sex—back in homosexual" and looks at how sex creates consciousness and community. Sadownick

focusses on the age-old "antagonism

between fucking-with-abandon and fucking-with-caution" which he relates to opposing Greek gods, "the culture of desire versus the culture of containment; the culture of respectability versus the culture of outlaws; the culture of Dionysus versus the culture of Apollo; the culture of Adonises versus the culture of ageing queens."

The Age of AIDS has been only one more chapter in this historical saga. Sadownick starts with the situational homoeroticism of the second world war, looks at the 1950s and early homophile movements, looks at the sexual revolution and gay liberation, reflects on the dizzying changes with

AIDS and queer nationalism, and ends looking at "the second wave" of the AIDS epidemic that began around 1993.



Along the way are great stories, "dirty talk" with spirit and empathy, and important facts. While he does not hide the damage from what he politely calls "intracommunity catfights", he sees conflict, debate, and political differences between "sexual-athletes-in-training" as creative—and not precluding of "hot" sex. All is not well at a time of a continuing epidemic, racism, a continued emphasis on more transitory forms of looks and vulnerability to the worst forms of crass consumerism.

Throughout Sadownick's often raunchy forays into the baths, washrooms, sex parties and bedrooms of gay America, he looks for god in many forms. He believes that even with all the traumas and setbacks from AIDS gay men are quickly moving to an accessible culture where gay sexuality, sacredness, and spirituality are intertwined.

There is an optimism which is more substantiated in dreams and visions than current realities. But just how important is sex for gay men? Sadownick shows how over the years its role in people's lives and its social function has varied tremendously but has led to the better parts of us and not the worst and concludes that, "the odyssey of gay life over five decades proves at least this much: that a magical thread links one's third eye with one's cock."

While this new mindfulness is still a ways off for many of us, Sadownick shows that if we have already travelled such great distances in just half a century, new depths of empathy and connectedness is inevitable.

*Brent Ingram is an aspiring queerscape architect based in Vancouver whose large anthology, **Queers in Space: Landscapes of Marginalized Sexualities and Communities** goes to press any day now.*