



The Rest of It: Hustlers, Cocaine, Depression, and Then Some, 1976–1988

Martin Duberman

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For many, the death of a parent marks a low point in their personal lives. For Martin Duberman—a major historian and a founding figure in the history of gay and lesbian studies—the death of his mother was just the beginning of what became a twelve-year period filled with despair, drug addiction, and debauchery. From his cocaine use, massive heart attack, and immersion into New York's gay hustler scene to experiencing near-suicidal depression and attending rehab, *The Rest of It* is the previously untold and revealing story of how Duberman managed to survive his turbulent personal life while still playing leading roles in the gay community and the academy.

Despite the hardships, Duberman managed to be incredibly productive: he wrote his biography of Paul Robeson, rededicated himself to teaching, wrote plays, and coedited the prize-winning *Hidden from History*. His exploration of new paths of scholarship culminated in his founding of the Center for Lesbian and Gay Studies, thereby inaugurating a new academic discipline. At the outset of the HIV/AIDS epidemic Duberman increased his political activism, and in these pages he also describes the tensions between the New Left and gay organizers, as well as the profound homophobia that created the conditions for queer radical activism. Filled with gossip, featuring cameo appearances by luminaries such as Gore Vidal, Norman Mailer, Vivian Gornick, Susan Brownmiller, Kate Millett, and Néstor Almendros, among many others, and most importantly, written with an unflinching and fearless honesty, *The Rest of It* provides scathing insights into a troubling decade of both personal and political history. It is a stimulating look into a key period of Duberman's life, which until now had been too painful to share.

The Rest of It: Hustlers, Cocaine, Depression, and Then Some, 1976–1988 Details

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John says

recommend read for all LGBTQ non-profit organizational staffs & volunteers--

holds no punches per status quo-- of the United States of homosexuality--

Heather says

I enjoyed this book on a very cerebral level. It was like reading a cross between a memoir and a text book. He's one of those people whose intelligence would be intimidating to me if we were ever to meet. But I want to find and read his other books now. I also love his penchant for alliteration. It reminds me of me, and makes him feel just a bit more approachable. :)

willowdog says

I'll admit I'm a Duberman fan. As I was reading this work my thoughts turned to writers. Are authors above it all? Do they live lives different from how we live? Are their lives devoid of conflict because they put so much of their being into their writing? If anything this is certainly not the case for Paul. He bleeds and feels and deals with the world as best as one can--and sometimes not as good as one might. In the Rest of It Martin examines these years using memory and dairies that give such an honest portrait of the life of an gay author at this time. I find it interesting that Duberman can be so honest with himself and readers in describing his loves and failures and conflicts. He holds nothing back in this work. I especially enjoy the history/difficulty of writing of his Paul Robeson biography.

Thanks to Net Galley and the publisher for providing this electronic version.

Kevin says

Lambda Award-winning historian, novelist and academic Martin Duberman (Midlife Queer) reveals that he's avoided writing about the 12 years covered in THE REST OF IT in his previous memoirs because "[t]hose were the most painful years of my life." Despite emotional turmoil and debilitating health scares, it was also one of his most productive periods as a writer and pioneering gay activist. THE REST OF IT is a mesmerizing and fearlessly candid memoir that begins with the death of his mother and a succession of failed romantic relationships. His grief leads to panic attacks, a deepening depression and, finally, a massive heart attack at 49.

Once recovered, Duberman strives to avoid his "deep hermit instincts" by trying to be more social. "Ever steadfast in pursuit of unavailability," he finds it easier to buy companionship at a New York City hustler bar. Cocaine helps reignite his desire to write. His life improves when he begins working on a biography of Paul Robeson. He gets a massive advance paycheck from his publisher, but becomes entangled with

Robeson's unstable son who tries to sabotage the project. The chapters on researching "Paul Robeson: A Biography"y are riveting. There's also plenty of literary gossip sprinkled throughout. Gore Vidal confesses that he slept with Jack Kerouac, telling Duberman, "I felt he and I owed it to American Literature to go to bed together."

Duberman's emotionally raw and keenly observant memoir illuminates both his turbulent life and the years when gay publishing began to flower just as AIDS started to devastate its landscape.

Martin Duberman's emotionally raw and fearlessly candid memoir covers the 12 most painful years of his life.

Rj says

The latest autobiography by queer historian Martin Duberman the book chronicles his battles with depression in the late 1970s, through to the 1980s. The narrative is written in a light and easy to read style that belies the subject. What is most fascinating is that as an historian he is able to not only chronicle the changes in his own life but how they relate to wider changes in the gay world.

"I was still too ashamed of being gay; "coming out," most people don't seem to realize, is often a strategy for greater self-acceptance, not the thing itself." 3

"The shift in the movement itself, from radicalism to reformism, made its own large contribution to my decreasing commitment.") 10

"The small, struggling gay political movement of the late seventies was no match for the explosion of libidinal energy that characterized the burgeoning gay male disco scene." 45

"Equating economic success, as the right (Calvinist to the core) did, with evidence of spiritual salvation, the corollary followed that any individual failing to thrive under the benign system of laissez-fair capitalism had only themselves to blame. The growing maldistribution of wealth, according to these true believers, was the result not of existing class, race, and gender barriers to advancement but rather to an individual's lack of ability to drive-or, more simply, to "immorality." 56-56

"What as and still is needed is a movement infused with the recognition that (to quote James Baldwin) our top priority isn't "to rent a room in a house that's burning down" but to build a new house. The radical cutting edge of the current generation of gay activists has today finally shifted the goal from equality to liberation." 70

"For its part, the Reagan administration responded not with additional funds for research and treatment but with proposals for sharp cuts in the budget of the Centers for Disease Control and the National Institutes of Health. During that same year the Tylenol scare, in which a grand total of seven people died after taking cyanide-laced pills, the federal government-within two weeks-allocated \$10 million to investigate the contamination." 115

"Further indicative of the federal government's apathetic reaction to "the gay disease" was the failure of both the CDC and the NIH to recommend that physicians give their GRID patients the inexpensive drug Bactrim, a known prophylactic against PCP." 116

"The more the AIDS movement, with the onset of ACT-UP in 1987, turned toward the radical tactics of

confrontational direct action, the more it sounded like the resurrected voice of the Gay Liberation Front that had formed in the aftermath of the 1969 Stonewall riots." 120

"Those of us who-naively, perhaps-had believed the gay movement had the potential to become an instrument of transformational social change were shocked at the swiftness and ease with which it underwent a major face-lift and became a mere supplicant for equal "citizenship." 142

"AA, I decided was a philosophical mishmash: we were all at once to throw ourselves on the mercy of the deity and at the same time pull ourselves up by our own bootstraps-Calvinist resignation impossibly yoked to ahistorical optimism." 169

Julene says

I'm a fan of Martin Duberman since reading his book, "Hold Tight Gently: Michael Callen, Essex Hemphill, and the Battlefield of AIDS." So I was very excited to read his newest memoir, "The Rest of It: Hustlers, Cocaine, Depression, and Then Some 1976—1988." In this memoir, he writes about the difficult years of his life.

Some quotes

""Coming out," most people don't seem to realize, is often a strategy for greater self-acceptance, not the thing itself."

"But self-recrimination no longer had the hold on me it once did. I felt I was at least beginning to live the life of an everyday mortal: "due" nothing, not even a long life; susceptible to the usual number of "unwarranted" disappointments, jolts, and denials; myself responsible for steering clear of people and occasions that called out my underdeveloped penchant for self assault. I would never fully learn to "settle"—my privileged upbringing guaranteed an abnormally high set of expectations—despite future defeats waiting in the wings. Yet, I was less sanguine about prospects and outcomes, less optimistic about my ability to produce a desired result. Reduced expectations were expressed in how I socialized. "

"But I didn't feel at all confident about just how the "left" the gay mainstream was these days: disco, drugs, and sex still maintained their primacy in urban, privileged, gay, white male circles, preempting political activity."

"Other organizations, such as the Gay Liberation Front, the Gay Activists Alliance, the Radicalesbians, had earlier conducted daring "zaps" and street actions that not only raised public awareness of our mistreatment but had also produced some important concrete results."

"Yet the counterculture élan that had characterized gay political groups in the immediate aftermath of the Stonewall riots, which had called for every alliance of all oppressed minorities in the struggle to sweep away entrenched structural inequalities ("intersectionality" they call it today, often assuming the concept is brand new), had all but disappeared by 1980. Zaps had given way to law briefs, sit-ins to petitions, marches to lobbying, radicalism to reformism. The building of a network of viable community institutions had been successfully begun—but they were primarily in service to the needs of a privileged white male constituency."

..."The board members who uttered these remarks (and there were others) would have angrily rejected my characterization of them as "homophobic," and that, as I wrote in my diary, is exactly the trouble with

"sophisticated" liberals: "their rhetoric avoids the grosser forms of bigotry, assuming a guise subtle enough to allow them to disguise from themselves the nature of their feelings"—a feature of liberalism with which blacks have long been familiar."

"...multiple studies have shown—that LGBTQ people are more empathetic and altruistic than heterosexuals and that lesbians are far more independent-minded, and less subservient to authority, than straight women. Most gay men, moreover, unlike straight ones, put a premium on emotional expressiveness and sexual experimentation."

"One holds on to a group identity, despite its insufficiencies because for most non-mainstream people it's the closest we've ever gotten to having a political home—and voice. Yes, identity politics reduces and simplifies. Yes, it's a kind of a prison. But it is also paradoxically, a haven. It is at once confirming and empowering. And in the absence of alternative havens, group identity will for many continue to be the appropriate site for many continue to be the appropriate site of resistance and the main source of comfort. Straight critics of identity politics employ high-flown, hectoring rhetoric about the need to transcend our "parochial" allegiances and unite behind enlightenment "rationalism," to become "universal human beings with universal rights." But to me the injunction rings hollow and hypocritical. It's difficult to march into the sunset as a "civil community" with a "common cause" when the legitimacy of our differences as minorities has not yet been more than superficially acknowledged—let alone safeguarded. You cannot link arms under a universal banner when you can't find your own name on it. A minority identity may be contingent or incomplete, but that doesn't make it fabricated or needless. And cultural unity cannot—must not—be purchased at the cost of cultural erasure."

It is a good book to read alongside Mattilda Bernstein Sycamore's "That's Revolting," David France's "How To Survive A Plague," and his earlier book I mention above. We have a lot to learn about gay history and how to create a revolution for change.

He mentions three memoirs he wrote earlier, plus this book goes into the details of writing the Paul Robeson biography, books I now want to read.

Tom says

Great read

Didn't know what to expect, but Martin Duberman's memoir covering roughly a decade of his life was a great read. Many familiar historians, authors, activists and others appear.
