

Notes on “Only after Stonewall”

The anthology *Persistent Voices: Poetry by Writers Lost to AIDS*, features writings by Reinaldo Arenas, Joe Brainard, Tory Dent, Essex Hemphill, and many others.

Joe Brainard (1942-1994) Arkansas-born artist and writer, Brainard authored a memoir called “I Remember” in the 1970s. He died of AIDS complications in 1994.

Giovanni’s Room: novel by James Baldwin set in 1950s Paris. The story explores themes of sexuality and racism.

James Baldwin (1924-1987) influential American playwright, essayist, novelist, and civil rights activist. Baldwin’s writings dealt insightfully with racism in American society. He was also one of the first writers to include gay/queer themes, as in his 1956 novel *Giovanni’s Room*.

Essex Hemphill (1957-1995) an American poet. A gay Black man, Hemphill’s work addressed issues of race, sexuality, and HIV/AIDS. He died of AIDS complications in 1995.

Reinaldo Arenas (1947-1990) a Cuban poet, novelist, and LGBTQ activist who fled Cuba in 1980. HIV positive, he died in 1990.

Tender Buttons is a 1914 modernist publication of prose-poetry by Gertrude Stein.

Ann Bannon (b. 1932) has been called the “Queen of Lesbian Pulp Fiction” for her novels about young lesbians in 1950s/60s Greenwich Village, New York. In the past 20 years, several of her novels have been adapted for the stage.¹

Edith Windsor (1929-2017) was the lead plaintiff in the 2013 Supreme Court case *States vs Windsor*, which granted federal recognition to married same-sex couples. The decision applied in

¹ <https://www.annbannon.com/>

13 states and the District of Columbia. A 2015 Supreme Court case (Obergefell) later broadened protections to same sex married couples throughout the nation. Edith (Edie) Windsor had lived with her partner, Thea Spyer, for 40 years before they had the opportunity to legally marry in Canada in 2007.

Brooks Brothers: a clothing retailer founded in 1818, Brooks Brothers is known as a luxury fashion brand for classic apparel. They were the first fashion retailer to offer men “the ready made suit,” which first appeared in 1849.

Givenchy: a fashion house famous for glamour, founded by Hubert Givenchy in 1952. Givenchy’s most famous design was the black dress he designed for Audrey Hepburn to wear in the film, *Breakfast at Tiffany’s*.