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## Review of *Out Our Way: Gay and Lesbian Life in the Country* By Michael Riordon

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hundred gay men and lesbians in rural Canada, he distills the personal narratives of subjects from the pseudonymous tightly closeted to local semi-acknowledged "characters" and internationally known figures such as writer Jane Rule or Jim Egan, recent challenger to the Canadian Charter of Rights. Quotable nuggets of wisdom and sharp human observation come from all, often marked by fear, loneliness, and bigotry. Overwhelmingly, story after story echoes the phrase, "I always knew I was different." And then like "someone who knows pain, and who's found in himself the wherewithal to deal with it," each has struck out like a pioneer to find a place to fit in and a way to cope—away from the urban sanctuary too often identified as the only locale in which gays and lesbians can survive.

Their homes, spanning the continent, are sometimes located in harsh and isolated circumstances (even under the same roof as disapproving parents and siblings), sometimes in a carefully nurtured pocket of mutual support. In contrast to the ghetto of glitz and consumerism typified by urban lifestyle magazines, perhaps the most salient feature springing from these narratives is the close, yet occasionally uneasy integration of individuals into communities where life is often lived in a fishbowl.

Riordon has himself created the impression of varied landscape by giving each of his sixty chosen pieces a descriptive title, such as "GWM seeks" or "God's country," with no byline. The lack of index of interviewees, certainly a flaw were this an academic treatise, here helps Riordon create an impressionistic snapshot of rural gay life, enhanced by cross references to where partners' and friends' parallel stories may be found in the anthology. This heightens the sense of precious filaments of a network and astounding geographical variety among subjects who run the gamut of mobility and rootedness.

Not surprisingly, weather and seasonal life are prominent features in Riordon's careful description of settings and situations. Yet always in the forefront is the non-judgmental

*Out Our Way: Gay and Lesbian Life in the Country.* By Michael Riordon. Toronto: Between the Lines, 1996. xiii + 100 pp. \$19.95 paper.

Michael Riordon, radio playwright and author of *The First Stone: Homosexuality and the United Church* (1990), is obviously a master interviewer. From meetings with some three

depiction of each individual's struggle to fit in and deal with a life imposed or a life chosen. The author is candid in apologizing for his inadequate contacts with Francophones and First Nations subjects, yet *Out Our Way* is remarkably balanced in coverage of lesbian as well as gay stories and refreshingly inclusive in terms of race and age of the interviewees.

Riordon is a remarkably unobtrusive visitor in the lives portrayed here. His individual style is evident only in the autobiographical pieces in each section that follow him and his partner in their own rural saga.

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