



Visions and Revisions

Dale Peck

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Novelist and critic Dale Peck's latest work—part memoir, part extended essay—is a foray into what the author calls “the second half of the first half of the AIDS epidemic,” i.e., the period between 1987, when the AIDS Coalition to Unleash Power (ACT UP) was founded, and 1996, when the advent of combination therapy transformed AIDS from a virtual death sentence into a chronic manageable illness.

Reminiscent of Joan Didion's *The White Album* and Kurt Vonnegut's *Palm Sunday*, *Visions and Revisions* is a sweeping, collage-style portrait of a tumultuous era. Moving seamlessly from the lyrical to the analytical to the reportorial, Peck's story takes readers from the serial killings of gay men in New York, London, and Milwaukee, through Peck's first loves upon coming out of the closet, to the transformation of LGBT people from marginal, idealistic fighters to their present place in a world of widespread, if fraught, mainstream acceptance.

The narrative pays particular attention the words and deeds of AIDS activists, offering a streetlevel portrait of ACT UP with considerations of AIDS-centered fiction and criticism of the era, as well as intimate, sometimes elegiac portraits of artists, activists, and HIV-positive people Peck knew. Peck's fiery rhetoric against a government that sat on its hands for the first several years of the epidemic is tinged with the idealism of a young gay man discovering his political, artistic, and sexual identity. The result is a visionary and indispensable work from one of America's most brilliant and controversial authors.

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