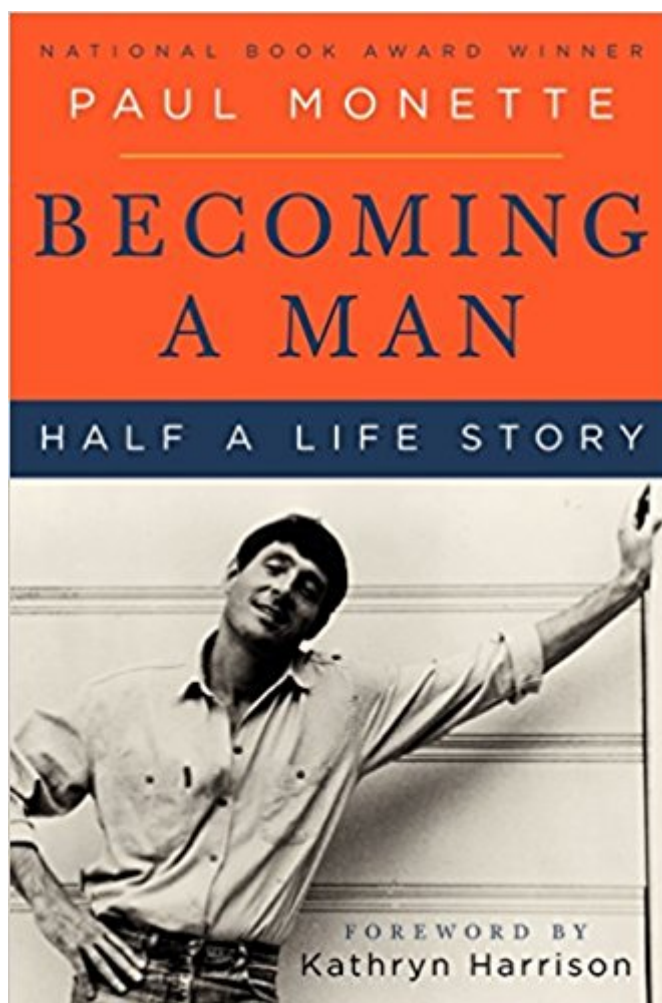


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Becoming A Man: Half A Life Story (Perennial Classics)



Synopsis

A child of the 1950s from a small New England town, "perfect Paul" earns straight A's and shines in social and literary pursuits, all the while keeping a secret—•from himself and the rest of the world. Struggling to be, or at least to imitate, a straight man, through Ivy League halls of privilege and bohemian travels abroad, loveless intimacy and unrequited passion, Paul Monette was haunted, and finally saved, by a dream of "the thing I'd never even seen: two men in love and laughing." Searingly honest, witty, and humane, *Becoming a Man* is the definitive coming-out story in the classic coming-of-age genre.

Book Information

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Customer Reviews

Paul Monette first made a name for himself in 1978 with his debut novel, *Taking Care of Mrs. Carroll*, a comic romp with serious overtones. He established himself as a writer of popular fiction with three more novels before he and his lover were both diagnosed with HIV. In 1988 he wrote *On Borrowed Time*, a memoir of living with AIDS and of his lover's death. The passion and anger that fueled *On Borrowed Time* surfaces again in 1992's *Becoming a Man: Half a Life Story*, his National Book Award-winning autobiography. Although it follows the traditional structure of the autobiography and bildungsroman—early family life, education, reflections on how art influenced the subject's view of life—*Becoming a Man* also filters Monette's story through two central facts: the closet and AIDS. Monette writes of the pain of being closeted, the effect it had on his writing, and how it shaped (and often destroyed) his relationships. Monette's fear and fury at AIDS and homophobia heighten the

same skill and imagination he put into his fiction. This vision--poetic yet highly political, angry yet infused with the love of life--is what transforms *Becoming a Man* from simple autobiography into an intense record of struggle and salvation. Paul Monette did not lead a life different from many gay men--he struggled courageously with his family, his sexuality, his AIDS diagnosis--but in bearing witness to his and others' pain, he creates a personal testimony that illuminates the darkest corners of our culture even as it finds unexpected reserves of hope. --This text refers to an out of print or unavailable edition of this title.

Monette responds to readers of his first memoir, *Borrowed Time*, by providing the flip-side expository of his life in the closet until he met his soul mate--the laughing man, Roger Horwitz. This memoir (which might more aptly have been titled *Wasted Time*) is a bitter reproach of the 27 years Monette spent searching for himself. He explains that it took him years to realize that the homophobe is the deviant. Reading this beautifully written book, one feels as trapped by its dark mood as the author was by the closet. The writing is occasionally marred, however, by repetitive phrases, such as "playing courtier," "the closet" and the endless search for "the laughing man." The story also unfolds choppily due to frequent references to the future. Nevertheless, the book is a heartfelt illumination of how a gay person overcame the self-reproach that societal condemnation enacts. Copyright 1992 Reed Business Information, Inc. --This text refers to an out of print or unavailable edition of this title.

First, let me say that I absolutely loved this book (at least, up to the end where I got distracted by my own dizzy discretion or prudish mindset perhaps, with such a vast cast of characters fixated on sex, as a means to an end, or the brash start of some anonymous sort in the search for love & all that that entails), together with Paul's overall ability to write with some certain clarity on exactly how he felt about himself, both emotionally & physically, as well as academically about the peculiar persona of his human equation & also the world-at-large, which was the object of his righteous aka pseudo-religious repression. Secondly, Paul wrote the poignant & truthful subtitle/headline or the first-line with regard to love, or a flight of fancy perhaps, but then again he wasn't quite sure what he meant by love, at the time & after such a short duration of acquaintance; since we, as in the royal we (to include myself) are often attracted to the object of our desire by oddly different aspects of another person's being or presence, that the infinite word, love doesn't always mean all-inclusive at the start, as we are never always in control of our unbiased faculties at

such a time, in order to comprehend the subsequent consequences of such a substantial statement, in my opinion, based on what feels like a century of my own dumb-founded experience. Yet I don't mean to sound so saintly! But then I digress from Paul's main point that he was looking for love when, in fact, as he said, he couldn't even love himself. ...to break the final bonds of self-hatred so I could begin to love. ...my eagerness to talk all night if it made me learn to love a little better. ...and get to know myself. Thus, another favorite & comparative line I thought, at first, to use as the subtitle/heading for this review, in Paul's always insightful & very often humorous words I remember thinking we could make it work if we could always be on vacation. If you can judge not the man, nor whatever deed affects your disfavor, but rather the overall attempt by Paul to find an acceptable answer to his decades of dilemma, not that it was his blatant & unmistakable fault in any way, but that the thing he both fought & sought was his default by nature to torment himself to take action, rather than inaction. I think, fear like love, is often indescribable until you tell someone your story, so they can relate on some level & probably still not completely understand the bare necessities of such a naked undertaking. Still, Paul didn't hide from both the mental & physical altercation. I no sooner started this book & decided I wanted to meet the author, if only to shake his hand in respect for both his intricate work & mammoth effort, or recognition of something noble (like the last scene in the 2016 movie, *La La Land* when the 2 main characters acknowledge their past lives together & divergent mutual growth, but still find it hard to accept the emotional truth of such an adventure) and/or thanks again to Paul for being so brave & bold, in the face of so much personal fear & universal disdain, or so it would seem from my separate & silent perspective. At any rate, I was prepared to figure out where he lived, so I could make a pilgrimage of some sort, or maybe just in my mind at the start of my exuberance for a new favorite author, when I discovered that Paul had died shortly after he wrote this book. I can't imagine how he kept his mind so focused in the present & still could remember so many details from his past, which ultimately gave him what he was looking for finally, after such a long time. Paul Monette's *Memoir, Becoming A Man* was published in 1992, just 3-years before he died (at age 49) in 1995. I would like to propose a toast that we never forget this literary intellect & political activist, going forward, each & every year on the anniversary of his birth, October 16th, or whenever the urge should move you to tears, to remember the man who cared so much for others, as he reminds us in his melancholy yet optimistic memoir *We*

are creatures of the cruelties we witness. Esther B. Fein wrote in Paul's obituary in the New York Times (dated February 12th 1995); He kept writing until the end. When he was found to have full-blown AIDS (in 1993), he wrote his last book Last Watch of the Night while hooked up to three intravenous tubes and taking a mound of oral medications daily. Rest in Peace, Paul! Book review by Jack Dunsmoor, author of the book, OK2BG.

Paul Monette's writing is poetical and incisive. His self-analysis and his accounts of earlier years are a pleasure to read. The events and thoughts flow effortlessly. Highly recommended.

Loved it, Paul's life paralleled my life in many ways, including marriage. Loved the concept that gays in every era of human history, every ethnic, cultural, religious, social, political gender group, seem to be the genetic carriers of humankind's altruistic traits. While heterosexual counterparts are more centered on survival, procreation and non confrontational society. Makes perfect sense, but have never heard that theory before. He came from the closet to eventual activist. So sad that he is gone! Good read.

Well written, a wonderful story. Recommended to society and anyone struggling with their sexuality. A great gift to a son that is gay or bisexual and necessary for parents to read.

I bought this book to better understand my brother, who had not come out yet, but, I was wanting to help him in some way. This was a great way to see things from his point of view and we grew very close because, later he was able to tell me.

Very well written, his journey to becoming a whole person is definitely worth reading.

It's about the author's painful struggle with accepting his homosexuality.

Interesting look at a man the early years of dealing with sexual orientation and its twists and turns.

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