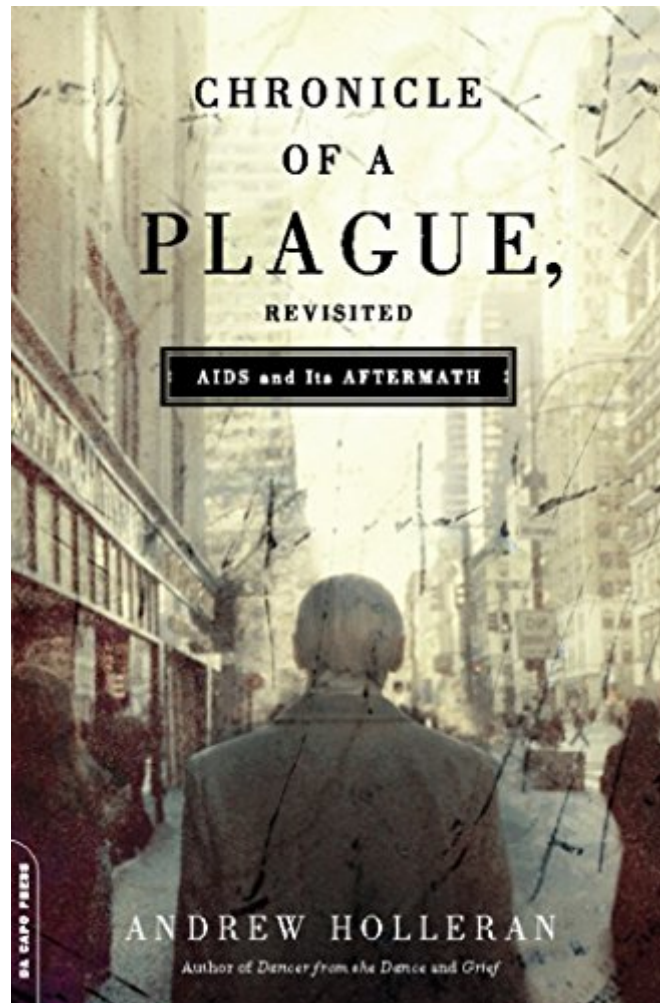




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Chronicle Of A Plague, Revisited: AIDS And Its Aftermath



Synopsis

Andrew Holleran's *Ground Zero*, first published in 1988 and consisting of 23 Christopher Street essays from the earliest years of the AIDS crisis, was hailed by the *Washington Post* as "one of the best dispatches from the epidemic's height." Twenty years later, with HIV/AIDS long recognized as a global health challenge, Holleran both reiterates and freshly illuminates the devastation wreaked by AIDS, which has claimed the lives of 450,000 gay men as well as 22 million others. *Chronicle of a Plague, Revisited* features ten pieces never previously republished outside Christopher Street, as well as a new introduction keenly describing and evaluating a historical moment that still informs and defines today's world—particularly its community of homosexuals, which, arguably, is still recovering from the devastation of AIDS.

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Customer Reviews

When Andrew Holleran burst on the gay literary scene with *DANCER FROM THE DANCE* we knew we had never read anything quite this wonderful before that was about us. He has consistently written fine novels since that time and continues to fill a needed niche in gay literature, whatever

that term means. I have read and own every book he has written, and always looked forward to reading his columns in the gay literary magazine "Christopher Street." Now twenty years after the collection of essays dealing with AIDS was published as GROUND ZERO, he has revisited that volume, make some deletions, some additions and has written a thoughtful new introduction. These essays are still painful to reread, calling to mind things I had forgotten: the four hour buzzer to remind patients to take AZT, the friends who would not drink from the same glass as another, the treatment that Rock Hudson went to France for, the euphemistic use of the word "exposure" rather than saying someone had been exposed to AIDS, Patient Zero. The list goes on and on. In his introduction Mr. Holleran says that he wrote these essays out of a great feeling of fear and impotence-- when writing fiction seemed useless-- something he captures with awful eloquence in what perhaps is his very best writing. Although he lived in the center of the storm in New York, his experiences were mirrored, sad to say, in every major city in this country during the awful 1980's. His Emmanuels, Eddies and Cosmos et al were my Pierces and Ralphs and Kens and Judds.

Andrew Holleran's book, *Dancer From the Dance*, was the first piece of gay fiction I ever read back in college. After reading it twice, I immediately sought out his other books. He still remains my all time favorite writer to this day. I was fortunate enough to get my hands on a used copy of *Ground Zero* here on many years ago. In the introduction of his new book, *Chronicle of a Plague*, Holleran mentions that he had to find a copy of the out of print book at the library. Over the course of 20 years, it had only been checked out about 12 times, a strange metaphor for how society sometimes views AIDS. It's a subject which comes and goes from our attention sporadically, but is still there and still is a harsh truth we have to face. When I found out about this new book being an updated version of *Ground Zero* with new stories, a refocus on the "plague," I decided to go back and reread the original. Holleran's bath house conversations and tales of the "ole days" on Fire Island were like reading history for me, a history I didn't experience because I was too young then or not even born. The AIDS I know is very different from the one Holleran writes about. And yet, it is still the same. Some of us have just forgotten about it, or have chosen to forget. And so, Holleran demands that we refocus on it here in this revamped collection. He has removed some of the stories which were more about the sexual freedom that quickly became a thing of the past, and turned our eyes more toward the personal effects the disease had, and still has, on his friends and acquaintances. How has it changed us in twenty years, how has it changed gay culture, and how has it changed America?

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