Life is not easy for the gay male in North America, but it is a breeze compared to life in "G'day Mate!" Australia where homophobia seems to be a national trait sometimes refined to a horrifying cruelty. Seaton Daly is a gay writer who comes of age in depression-era Sydney. For Seaton, Sydney is anything but a "fairyland." Indeed, Sumner Locke Elliott’s title is a satirical allusion to a decrepit amusement park that symbolizes the false "joie-de-vivre" of gay Sydney. Sydney society's frantic effort to recreate under southern skies the brittle cosmopolitanism of European cities is deftly rendered in Fairyland. However, Elliott - author of nine previous novels - also rejoices in the vitality and brazen exuberance that are the treasures of this city. In this world where an elite private school life is termed "Acadia," Seaton Daly is a double imposter: First, he attends Prince Albert School only because his cousin is maid to a woman who decides "the little darling" living under her roof must be educated; Second, he is secretly gay in a belligerently straight world. 2/19/2019 ProQuest :: eLibrary ~ Chasm separates American, Australian novels on gay life; Clever black humor sidesteps sentimentality

https://explore.proquest.com/elibrary/document/251687017?searchid=1550548856&accountid=160691 2/3 But Seaton fights back. While still a small boy he declares aloud to himself: "I am different." For the rest of his life, he struggles to stay true to himself and never betray "the love that dare not speak its name." His is a struggle marked by suffering made all the greater because it is done in a dark silence lit only briefly by moments of intense joy. Ironically, the most enduring love of Seaton’s life is a straight woman who eventually marries one of Seaton’s ill-chosen infatuations. Betty loves Seaton unreservedly but not uncritically. It is she who points out the artificiality of Seaton’s actor lover, demanding "Now, don’t you be unreal." As Seaton drifts from one doomed love affair to the next, the failure of his personal life seems all the more stark by the almost-accidental success of his professional life: he writes sentimental comedies that are eventually produced on Broadway. Though bruised by the harshness of life, Seaton never loses his compassion for others who dwell on the fringes of love. He is fiercely angry at Skinner, a gay friend who is desperately loved by a straight young girl he cruelly ridicules: "You pervert it, Skinner. . . That girl Patience loved you the way I’m talking about, not asking for anything back, and you threw it away. . . ." In an, alas, all too frequent moment of despondency, Seaton pleads, "There must be somewhere on earth where oddity (goes) unremarked." But the only reply he gets comes from a cynical older gay man who, observing a boy and girl kissing, says wryly: "That is what is known as real life. We are the dream." The potential sentimentality of Fairyland is cauterized by the black humor of Elliott’s original and outrageous
characters. There is Rat, the pathetic old gay yearning for young men he cannot have; Gin, sharp-tongued and aloof; and Lloyd, the bisexual Yankee GI. Each is given dignity cheerfully devoid of self-indulgence or mawkishness. Indeed, Elliott's characters revel in flippant witticisms and puns: "What about the Manly Fairies?" Seaton asks an American collector of oxymorons. Fairyland is a triumphant, poignant, occasionally caustic novel that dares to hope that someday life will be different for "the different" - even in Australia. Susan Bansgrove, a former Aussie, teaches English at Lakeland College Illustration 2/19/2019 ProQuest :: eLibrary ~ Chasm separates American, Australian novels on gay life; Clever black humor sidesteps sentimentality
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