



City of Cambridge

33.

IN CITY COUNCIL

April 27, 1998

COUNCILLOR TRIANTAFILLOU
COUNCILLOR BORN
COUNCILLOR DAVIS
MAYOR DUEHAY
VICE MAYOR GALLUCCIO
COUNCILLOR REEVES
COUNCILLOR RUSSELL
COUNCILLOR SULLIVAN
COUNCILLOR TOOMEY

WHEREAS: Novelist Stephen McCauley first book "The Object of My Affection" has been made into a movie, which will be in theaters; now therefore be it

RESOLVED: That this City Council go on record congratulating Stephen McCauley for his first novel and his first movie adapted from The Object of My Affection; and be it further

RESOLVED: That the City Clerk be and hereby is requested to forward a suitably engrossed copy of this resolution to Stephen McCauley on behalf of the entire City Council.

In City Council April 27, 1998.

Adopted by the affirmative vote of nine members.

Attest:- D. Margaret Drury, City Clerk.

A true copy;

A handwritten signature in cursive script, reading "D. Margaret Drury".

ATTEST:-

D. Margaret Drury
City Clerk

Councillor Triontafillou

✓ (33)

Whereas:

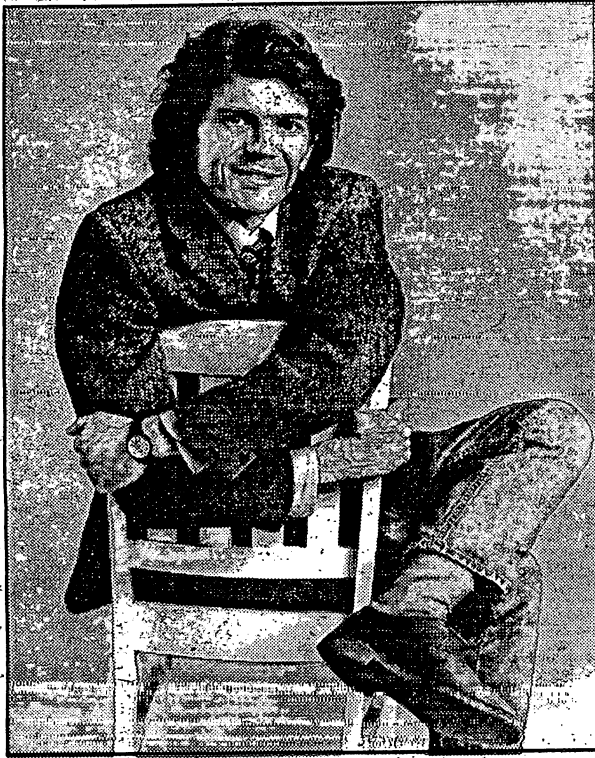
Novelist Stephen McCauley first book "The Object of my Affection" has been made into a movie which ~~is~~ will be in ~~the~~ theatres; now therefore be it

Resolved:

That this City Council go on record congratulating Stephen McCauley for his first ~~novel~~ novel and his first movie adapted from "The Object of my Affection"; and be it further

Resolved

SEC to Stephen McCauley.



Stephen McCauley. Photo: Sigrid Estrada

by Stephen Brophy

Cambridge-based novelist Stephen McCauley has been receiving a lot of attention recently, because a Hollywood adaptation of his first book, "The Object of My Affection," is poised to open in about 1,500 movie theaters across the country this week. The author seems to be happy with the adaptation, and equally happy that he did not have to write it. "When the book first came out, a lot of independent producers were trying to option it, and they were always saying that I should write the screenplay, that it's very important that I write the screen-

A life of one's own

Stephen McCauley discusses the movie made from his book 'The Object of My Affection' and criticism of his work

the idea that the novel was a stepping stone to getting a movie made. The novel had its problems, and there are things about it that embarrass me when I reread it and that I would like to change, but nevertheless, I'm done with it." McCauley spoke with Bay Windows over a late afternoon dessert at the Palms last week, doing his part to promote a film with the making of which he has had little actual involvement.

"I really like the movie a lot. Given that it's very different from the book in a lot of its particulars, I just kind of feel that I couldn't

have asked for a better movie. Because of course it could have been made into something really horrible—you know how many bad movies get made..." he trails off. Asked to comment on the many changes that were made from the original, McCauley was decidedly upbeat.

"Many of the changes that were made updated some of the plot elements, but they also tended to upscale it too. You can really see that a lot of the characters that were added were Wendy Wasserstein creations. They live more in the world that she is familiar with—the Upper East Side literary and theater world. This is especially true of

McCauley continues. "And I like how his relationship with the young man he lives with mimics that of Nina and George—Hawthorne is really in love with him but they don't have a sexual relationship—it's kind of a mirror, and it works really well."

As he talks, the author warms even more towards his subject. "The fact that she [Wasserstein] did change so many of the specifics of the novel actually clarifies the story. The screenplay is clearly inspired by the novel, but a lot of scenes in the movie seem like ghosts of the similar scenes in the novel. For instance the scene where George and Nina meet, an Upper East Side fancy dinner with rich people, is not at all the same as the arty downtown party in the book, but nonetheless it creates the same kind of dynamic between them, where they both feel outside the crowd around them and are drawn to each other."

The primary change

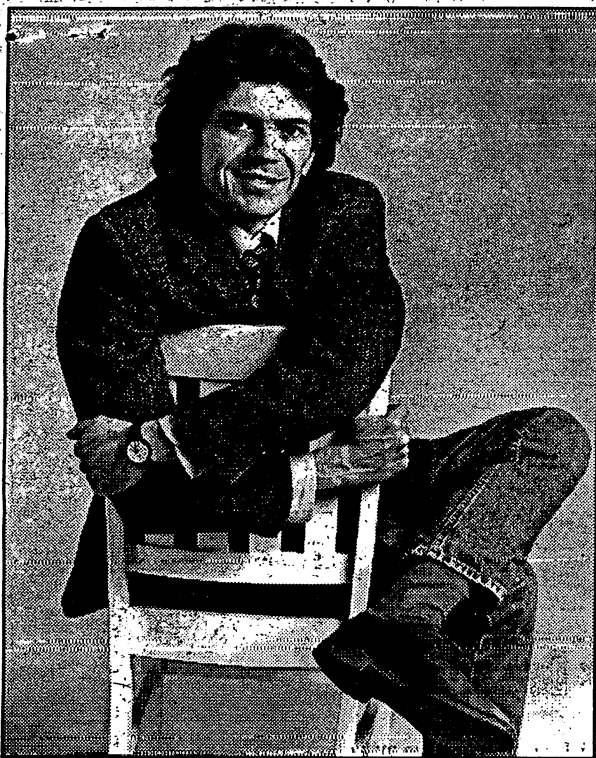
Putting his finger on the primary change mandated by the Hollywood desire for mainstream success, McCauley notes that "the main difference clearly is that the book is 100 percent from George's point of view, while in the movie the point of view shifts around, but is mostly hers. So in the book the 'object of my affection' is Nina, while in the movie it is him."

McCauley sums up by noting that "over-

setting up the social ladder a few rungs. The book is narrated by a sort of naive character who, hopefully, grows up during the course of the story. But the movie begins with quite a bit more perspective on the situation. That's fine with me—I don't view my book as some kind of sacred text which should not be altered in any way."

While the novel has been phenomenally successful, still in print more than a decade after its initial publication, it has also attracted a few critics. In an essay called "Five Houses of Gay Fiction" published several years ago (and reprinted in Michael Bronski's anthology of political writing entitled "Taking Liberties"), literature professor Reed Woodhouse lumped McCauley's novel into a category called assimilative literature, which he described as "deliberately integrative... fiction about gay men for straight readers."

When asked by Bay Windows how he felt about this criticism, McCauley responded: "He [Woodhouse] defines what he thinks of as assimilative fiction, which is fine. But then to make the leap that it is fiction about gay men which is written for straight readers assumes an awful lot about gay readers, like that gay readers wouldn't be interested in stories about finding a lover and settling down into a monogamous relationship, dealing with their families, or trying to create new families out of their friends, including



Stephen McCauley. Photo: Sigrid Estrada

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"This was flattering, but what I had set out to do was write a novel, and I sort of resented

A life of one's own

Stephen McCauley discusses the movie made from his book 'The Object of My Affection' and criticism of his work

the idea that the novel was a stepping stone to getting a movie made. The novel had its problems, and there are things about it that embarrass me when I reread it and that I would like to change, but nevertheless, I'm done with it." McCauley spoke with Bay Windows over a late afternoon dessert at the Palms last week, doing his part to promote a film with the making of which he has had little actual involvement.

"I really like the movie a lot. Given that it's very different from the book in a lot of its particulars, I just kind of feel that I couldn't have asked for a better movie. Because of course it could have been made into something really horrible—you know how many bad movies get made..." he trails off. Asked to comment on the many changes that were made from the original, McCauley was decidedly upbeat.

"Many of the changes that were made updated some of the plot elements, but they also tended to upscale it too. You can really see that a lot of the characters that were added were Wendy Wasserstein creations. They live more in the world that she is familiar with—the Upper East Side literary and theater world. This is especially true of the theatre critic played by Nigel Hawthorne.

"When I read the script I remember I kept thinking what a great character he is."

McCauley continues: "And I like how his relationship with the young man he lives with mimics that of Nina and George—Hawthorne is really in love with him but they don't have a sexual relationship—it's kind of a mirror, and it works really well."

As he talks, the author warms even more towards his subject. "The fact that she [Wasserstein] did change so many of the specifics of the novel actually clarifies the story. The screenplay is clearly inspired by the novel, but a lot of scenes in the movie seem like ghosts of the similar scenes in the novel. For instance the scene where George and Nina meet, an Upper East Side fancy dinner with rich people, is not at all the same as the arty downtown party in the book, but nonetheless it creates the same kind of dynamic between them, where they both feel outside the crowd around them and are drawn to each other."

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McCauley sums up by noting that "overall, the movie seems a little bit more sophisticated, which has to do with moving the

setting up the social ladder a few rungs. The book is narrated by a sort of naive character who, hopefully, grows up during the course of the story. But the movie begins with quite a bit more perspective on the situation. That's fine with me—I don't view my book as some kind of sacred text which should not be altered in any way."

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Consent Order #33

R-494

Councillor Triantafillou re: congratulations
to Stephen McCauley on his first novel and
first movie adapted from The Object of My
Affection.

In City Council April 27, 1998

ORDER ADOPTED

