



Henry Darger, Throwaway Boy: The Tragic Life of an Outsider Artist

Jim Elledge

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Utterly unknown during his lifetime, Henry Darger led a quiet, secluded existence as a janitor on Chicago's North Side. When he died, his landlord discovered a treasure trove of more than three hundred canvases and more than 30,000 manuscript pages depicting a rich, shocking fantasy world?many featuring hermaphroditic children being eviscerated, crucified, and strangled.

While some art historians tend to dismiss Darger as possibly psychotic, Jim Elledge cuts through the cloud of controversy and rediscovers Darger as a damaged and fearful gay man, raised in a world unaware of the consequences of child abuse or gay shame. This thoughtful, sympathetic biography tells the true story of a tragically misunderstood artist. Drawn from fascinating histories of the vice-ridden districts of 1900s Chicago, tens of thousands of pages of primary source material, and Elledge's own work in queer history, *Henry Darger, Throwaway Boy* also features a full-color reproduction of a never-before-seen canvas from a private gallery in New York, as well as a previously undiscovered photograph of Darger with his lifelong companion William Schloeder, or "Whillie" as Henry affectionately referred to him.

Engaging, arresting, and ultimately illuminating, *Henry Darger, Throwaway Boy* brings alive a complex, brave, and compelling man whose outsider art is both challenging and a triumph over trauma.

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