Wake-Up Call

October 1, 2003 By Nina Herzog

Chris Bull's ambitious tour of two decades of seminal AIDS writing, *While the World Sleeps* (Thunder's Mouth Press, $16.95), opens with Larry Kramer's typically whiny welcome. "I don't know why I'm writing an introduction to this book," he says. "I dislike most of the pieces in it, including mine." You'll disagree. Kramer's galvanizing anger offers the perfect counterpoint to the staggering upheaval these essays chart. Yes, a few are drier than the Sahara, but from "gay cancer" headlines to Fran Lebowitz's stirring elegy to her community of artists, Bull's range grips and provokes. Amid all its gay-white-maleness, the collection tucks in such critical salvos as Harlon Dalton's classic, "AIDS in Blackface." Bull's collective memory bleakly recalls how long we've known about AIDS—and how lousy we've been at stopping it.

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