

## In this issue...

- [Excuses, excuses, excuses](#)
- [The many skimmable lists of the Lambda Literary Awards](#)
  - [the finalists](#)
  - [my nominations](#)
  - [all the nominees](#)
- [33 years, or so, of the Stonewall Awards](#)
- [Wedding rings, civil unions, and the many kinds of cake](#)
- [The first essential book of 2004](#)
- [Andy Warhol is living – forever!](#)
- **[Printer-friendly version](#)**

# The Gay Men's Edition

January 2004

Volume 1 Number 3

By Richard Labonte

## A Virtual Breakdown

First I was struck blind, then I was struck (virtually) dumb. The blind bit is taken care of, after a summer of surgeries last year that delayed my contributions to Books to Watch Out For, but has left me with quite fine eyes again. Then Carol needed a few weeks to tweak the inner workings of the back office (processing subscriptions, making hyperlinks work, setting up the email); and just when all that tech stuff was sorted out, my heretofore trusty workhorse iMac had a nervous breakdown. Unfortunately, the nearest qualified therapist was a long, long drive from my rural life, so a few weeks went by before all was well again. But now Carol and I are set for the monthly schedule we had planned on . . . thanks for your patience.



[back to top](#)

## About BTWOF

Books to Watch Out For publishes monthly e-letters celebrating books on various topics. Each issue includes new book announcements, brief reviews, commentary, news and, yes, good book gossip.

## Deep Inside the Lambda Literary Awards

Hmmm. Despite that vaguely tabloid headline, this newsletter entry isn't really an expose of behind-the-scenes skullduggery in the high-stakes, hurt-egos world of the Lambda Literary Awards. Anyone can quibble with the Lammy finalists, and many do; I do, every year - and I've been assisting the hard-working Lambda Book Report staff with the awards from their very inception in 1988. In the early days, I nominated titles like

## The Lesbian Edition

covers both lesbian books and the whole range of books lesbians like to read. It covers news of both the women in print movement and mainstream publishing. Written and compiled by Carol Seajay.

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announces and reviews new books by and about gay men as well as other books of interest and gay publishing news. Written and compiled by Richard Labonte.

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anyone else; I've long been part of an advisory panel that helps make sure the right books are in the right categories, that they were published in the right year, and that exceptional books missed by nominators make it onto the long list of nominees. Most years, books I really, really like don't make it even as finalists - let alone win.

For the record - and I don't think this has been done anywhere before - three lists follow. The first is of official Lammy finalists - the titles dozens of judges are even now assessing, picking the "winner" to be announced at the Lambda Literary Foundation banquet later this year at the annual Book Expo America. The second reflects my choices in each category, ranked from highest to lowest in preference; my totals were added to those of the other members of a "finalists committee" - booksellers, reviewers, magazine editors, etc., an eclectic, savvy bunch of people with an affinity for print - and then averaged, massaged, pondered, tweaked, and stroked to produce the official list. I've reported after each category how many of my preferences were chosen - please note that I scored 0 out of 5 in the Gay Fiction category (though three of the five finalists, Bram, Russell, and Truong, came from additions I made to the original long-list of nominees); my particular tastes fared better in other categories. Whew.

And the third list - well, the data is raw, but revealing. I think the sheer number of titles that were nominated belies the claims that queer publishing is in serious decline. And while I don't have the numbers to confirm this, my impression is that fewer titles were nominated this year than in previous years - though starting last year and continuing for 2003 titles, anyone nominating a book (publishers, editors, authors, even fans of a book) were required to remit a \$20 fee for every title, an attempt by the perennially cash-strapped Lambda Literary Foundation, which administers the Lammies, to defray costs. There has been a pronounced shift from Big Publishers to Smaller Presses, but - particularly in the fiction and queer theory categories - there is a wealth of good books to read, and a wealth of topics tackled by our writers.

Here are the lists - a bit of analysis follows.

## The Lambda Literary Award Finalists

Lesbian Fiction

**And Then They Were Nuns**, by Susan J. Leonardi, Firebrand Books

**Southland**, by Nina Revoyr, Akashic Books

**The Way the Crow Files**, by Anne-Marie MacDonald, Harper

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### Collins

**This Wild Silence**, by Lucy Jane Bledsoe, Alyson Books

**What Night Brings**, Carla Trujillo, Curbstone Press

### Gay Fiction

**Beijing**, by Philip Gambone, University Of Wisconsin

**Lives of the Circus Animals**, by Christopher Bram, William Morrow

**The Book of Salt**, by Monique Truong, Houghton Mifflin

**The War Against the Animals**, by Paul Russell, St. Martin's Press

**Where the Boys Are**, by William J. Mann, Kensington Books

### Lesbian Poetry

**Embers**, by Terry Wolverton, Red Hen Press

**Final Girl**, by Daphne Gottlieb, Soft Skull Press

**Swirl**, by Susan McCabe, Red Hen Press

**The Beautiful**, by Michelle Tea, Manic D Press

**The Dirt She Ate**, by Minnie Bruce Pratt, University of Pittsburgh

### Gay Poetry

**Middle Earth**, by Henri Cole, FSG

**Otherhood: Poems**, by Reginald Shepherd, University of Pittsburgh

**Saying the World**, by Peter Pereira, Copper Canyon

**Sky Lounge**, by Mark Bibbins, Graywolf Press

**The Healing Art**, by Rafael Campo, W.W. Norton

### Lesbian Mystery

**Cry Havoc**, by Baxter Clare, Bella Books

**Damn Straight**, by Elizabeth Sims, Alyson Books

**Epitaph for an Angel**, by Lauren Maddison, Alyson Books

**Owl of the Desert**, by Ida Swearingen, New Victoria Press

**The Woman Who Found Grace**, by Bett Reece Johnson, Cleis Press

### Gay Mystery

**Blind Eye**, by John Morgan Wilson, St. Martin's Press

**Bourbon Street Blues**, by Greg Herren, Kensington Books

**Dead Egotistical Morons**, by Mark Richard Zubro, St. Martin's Press

**It Takes Two**, by Elliot Mackle, Alyson Books

**Wearing Black to the White Party**, by David Stukas, Kensington Books

### Fiction Anthologies

**All I Want for Christmas**, by Jon Jeffrey/Chris

Kenry/William J. Mann/Ben Tyler, Kensington Books

**Best Lesbian Love Stories 2003**, ed. by Angela Brown, Alyson Books

**M2M**, ed. by Karl Woelz, AttaGirl Press

**Pulp Friction**, ed. by Michael Bronski, St. Martin's Press

**Telling Moments**, ed. by Lydia Hall University of Wisconsin

Nonfiction Anthology

**Boyfriends from Hell**, ed. by Kevin Bentley Green Candy Press

**Mortal Secrets**, ed. by Robert Klitzman and Ronald Bayer, John Hopkins

**Queer Crips**, ed. by Bob Guter and John R. Killacky, Harrington Park Press

**The Love That Dare Not Speak Its Name**, ed. by Greg Wharton, Boheme Press

**The Philosopher Queen**, ed. by Chris Cuomo, Rowman & Littlefield

Memoir/Autobiography

**Cleopatra's Wedding Present**, by Robert Tewdwr Moss, University of Wisconsin

**Going the Other Way**, by Chris Bull and Billy Bean, Marlowe & Company

**Highsmith: A Romance of the 1950's**, by Marijane Meaker, Cleis Press

**Naked in the Promised Land**, by Lillian Faderman, Houghton Mifflin

**She's Not There**, by Jennifer Finney, Broadway Books

Biography

**Beautiful Shadow: A Life**, by Andrew Wilson, Bloomsbury

**Intertwined Lives**, by Lois W. Banner, Alfred A. Knopf

**Lost Prophet**, by John D'Emilio, Free Press

**Original Youth: The Real Story of Edmund White's**

**Boyhood**, by Keith Fleming, Green Candy Press

**That Furious Lesbian**, by Robert A. Schanke, Southern Illinois University Press

Children/YA

**Boy Meets Boy**, by David Levithan, Knopf Books for Young Readers

**Geography Club**, by Brent Hartinger, HarperTempest

**Gravel Queen**, by Tea Benduhn, Simon & Schuster

**Keeping You a Secret**, by Julie Anne Peters, Little Brown & Co.

**Rainbow High**, by Alex Sanchez, Simon & Schuster

Erotica

**Best Gay Erotica 2004**, ed. by Richard Labonte, Cleis Press

**Best Lesbian Erotica 2004**, ed. by Tristan Taormino, Cleis Press

**Hot and Bothered 4**, ed. by Karen X. Tulchinsky, Arsenal

## Pulp Press

**Masters of Midnight**, by Michael Thomas Ford/William J. Mann/Sean Wolfe/Jeff Mann, Kensington Books  
**Quickies 3**, ed. by James Johnstone, Arsenal Pulp Press

## Humor

**Chelsea Boys**, by Glen Hanson and Allan Neuwirth, Alyson Books  
**Dykes and Sundry Other Carbon-Based Life Forms to Watch Out For**, by Alison Bechdel, Alyson Books  
**Men are Pigs, But We Love Bacon**, by Michael Alvear, Kensington Books  
**My Big Fat Queer Life**, by Michael Thomas Ford, Alyson Books  
**That's Why They're in Cages, People!**, by Joel Perry, Alyson Books

## Romance

**Best Lesbian Love Stories 2003**, ed. by Angela Brown, Alyson Books  
**Daytime Drama**, by Dave Benbow, Kensington Books  
**Last Summer**, by Michael Thomas Ford, Kensington Books  
**Maybe Next Time**, by Karin Kallmaker, Bella Books  
**They Say She Tastes Like Honey**, by Michelle Sawyer, Alyson Books

## SF/Fantasy

**Elf Child**, by David M. Pierce, Southern Tier Editions  
**Necrologue**, ed. by Helen Sandler, Millivres  
**The Red Line of Yarmald**, by Diana Rivers, Bella Books  
**The Substance of God**, by Perry Brass, Belhue Press  
**Vampire Thrall**, by Michael Schiefelbein, Alyson Books

## Spirituality

**Anything But Straight**, by Wayne Besen, Harrington Park Press  
**Gay Perspective**, by Toby Johnson, Alyson Books  
**Gay Witchcraft**, by Christopher Penczak, Red Wheel/Weiser  
**Keeping Faith**, by Fenton Johnson, Houghton Mifflin  
**The Man Jesus Loved**, by Theodore W. Jennings, The Pilgrim Press

## LGBT Studies

**Anything But Straight**, by Wayne Besen, Harrington Park Press  
**Love in the Time of HIV**, by Michael Mancilla and Lisa Troshinsky, Guilford Publications  
**Queer Street**, by James McCourt, W.W. Norton  
**Strapped for Cash**, by Mack Friedman, Alyson Books  
**Time on Two Crosses**, ed. by Devon W. Carbado and Donald

Weise, Cleis Press

Drama

**Forbidden Acts**, by Ben Hodges, Applause Theatre  
**Motifs and Repetitions**, by C.E. Gatchalian, Writer's  
 Collective

**Prok**, by Brian Drader, J. Gordon Shillingford Publishing

**The Band Plays**, by Mart Crowley, Alyson Books

**Women in Turmoil: Six Plays**, ed. by Robert Schanke,  
 Southern Illinois University Press

Transgender/GenderQueer

**She's Not There**, by Jennifer Finney, Broadway Books

**The Drag King Anthology**, ed. by Donna Jean Troka,  
 Harrington Park Press

**The Man Who Would Be Queen**, by J. Michael Bailey,  
 Joseph Henry Press

**Trans-Gendered: Theology, Ministry, and Communities of  
 Faith**, by Justin Tanis, The Pilgrim Press

**Transgender Journeys**, by Virginia Ramey, The Pilgrim Press

Visual Arts/Photography

**A Face in the Crowd**, ed. by John Peterson, Matthew Shepard  
 Foundation

**Familiar Men**, by Laurie Toby Edison Shifting Focus Press

**Focus on Living**, by Roslyn Banish, University Of  
 Massachusetts Press

**Vacation in Ibiza**, by Lawrence Schimel & Sebas, NBM-  
 Eurotica

**Women Seeing Women**, ed. by Longhar Schirmer, W.W.  
 Norton

*For more info:*

For awards ceremony information, and a list of every Lambda  
 Literary Award winner since 1988 – [www.lambdalit.org](http://www.lambdalit.org)

Some analysis: in the earliest of days, nominations were dominated by gay, lesbian, and smaller presses; then for a few years the major publishers, most of them based in New York, tended to win a majority of the Lammies; in the past couple of years, the pendulum appears to have swung back to smaller and more queer publishers.

For books of 2003, Alyson is far and away the most prominent publisher - queer or otherwise - with 15 nominations for 14 books; Cleis Press is the next gay-run press, with five. Among presses not primarily queer but with a large lesbigay footprint, Kensington's imaginative slate of genre fiction (romance, humor, mystery, and particularly its clever anthologies of themed novellas) won it eight nominations; Harrington Park Press has five nominations for four titles (though only one for

its ambitious and eclectic Southern Tier and Alice Street fiction imprints); St. Martin's, without its pioneering Stonewall Inn Editions imprint – it was eliminated a couple of years ago, though a good number of gay books are still published - has four nominations; and the University of Wisconsin and The Pilgrim Press, both with notable gay lists, have three each. Add in the likes of Firebrand, Bella, AttaGirl, Belhue, Millivres, Manic D, and Arsenal Pulp, on the queer side, and Soft Skull, Akashic, Red Hen, Copper Canyon, and Graywolf on the inclusive side, and almost 70 of the 100 nominees come from smaller or gayly aggressive publishers. It's a situation I believe promises a fine future for our community's writers and readers.

### My Nominees In Each Category

(Ranked best to least best)

#### Lesbian Fiction

- 5 **Southland**, Nina Revoyr, Akashic Books
  - 4 **What Night Brings**, Carla Trujillo, Curbstone Press
  - 3 **This Wild Silence**, Lucy Jane Bledsoe, Alyson
  - 2 **The End of Youth**, Rebecca Brown, City Lights Press
  - 1 **The Way the Crow Flies**, Ann-Marie MacDonald, HarperCollins
- (I picked 4 of 5 nominees)

#### Gay Fiction

- 5 **Dancer**, Colum McCann, Metropolitan Books
  - 4 **Denny Smith and Other Stories**, Robert Gluck, Clear Cut Press
  - 3 **Timoleon Vita Come Home**, Dan Rhodes, Canongate
  - 2 **Leave Myself Behind**, Bart Yates, Kensington Books
  - 1 **The Music of Your Life**, John Rowell, Simon & Schuster
- (0 of 5! - even though I added the Bram, Russell, and Truong titles, all of them superb books, to the gay fiction category; to my mind, there were more than a couple of dozen worthy gay fiction titles this year...)

#### Lesbian Poetry

- 5 **Embers**, Terry Wolverton, Red Hen Press
  - 4 **The Dirt She Ate**, Minnie Bruce Pratt, University of Pittsburgh Press
  - 3 **Final Girl**, Daphne Gottlieb, Soft Skull Press
  - 2 **The Beautiful**, Michelle Tea, Manic D Press
  - 1 **Swirl**, Susan McCabe, Red Hen Press
- (5 for 5)

#### Gay Poetry

- 5 **Middle Earth**, Henri Cole, FSG
- 4 **The Healing Art**, Rafael Campo, W.W. Norton

3 **Otherhood: Poems**, Reginald Shepherd, University of Pittsburgh Press

2 **Saying the World**, Peter Pereira, Copper Canyon Press

1 **With Fingers at the Tips of My Words**, M.J. Arcaugelini, Beautiful Dreamer Press

(4 of 5)

Lesbian Mystery

5 **Epitaph for an Angel**, Lauren Maddison, Alyson

4 **The Woman Who Found Grace**, Bett Reece Johnson, Cleis

3 **Cry Havoc**, Baxter Clare, Bella

2 **Owl of the Desert**, Ida Swearingen, New Victoria

1 **Damn Straight**, Elizabeth Sims, Alyson

(5 of 5)

Gay Mystery

5 **The Dirt Peddler**, Dorien Grey, GLB Books

4 **With You in Spirit**, Steven Cooper, Alyson

3 **Mr. Timothy**, Louis Bayard, HarperCollins

2 **Tongue Tied**, Richard Stevenson St. Martin's

1 **Blind Eye**, John Morgan Wilson, St. Martin's

(1 of 5)

Fiction Anthology

5 **M2M**, ed. by Karl Woelz, AttaGirl Press

4 **Telling Moments**, ed. by Lydia Hall, University of Wisconsin Press

3 **Death Comes Easy**, ed. by Peter Burton, Millivres

2 **Necrologue**, ed. by Helen Sandler, Millivres

1 **All I Want for Christmas**, by Jon Jeffrey, Chris Kenry, William J. Mann, Ben Tyler, Kensington

(3 of 5)

Nonfiction Anthology

5 **Boyfriends From Hell**, ed. by Kevin Bentley, Green Candy Press

4 **Mortal Secrets: Truth and Lies in the Age of AIDS**, ed. by Robert Klitzman & Ronald Bayer, John Hopkins University Press

3 **Queer Crips: Disabled Gay Men and Their Stories**, ed. by Bob Guter & John R. Killacky, Harrington Park

2 **The Love that Dare Not Speak Its Name: Essays on Queer Desire and Sexuality**, ed. by Greg Wharton, Boheme Press

1 **Think Again**, ed. by Colin Robinson & Steven Fullwood

(4 of 5)

Memoir/Autobiography

5 **Cleopatra's Wedding Present**, Robert Tewdwr Moss, University of Wisconsin

4 **Highsmith: A Romance of the 1950's**, Marijane Meaker,



## Cleis Press

- 3 **Naked in the Promised Land**, Lillian Faderman, Houghton Mifflin  
 2 **Going the Other Way**, Billy Bean with Chris Bull, Marlowe & Co.  
 1 **What We Lost**, Dale Peck, Houghton Mifflin  
 (4 of 5)

## Biography

- 5 **Lost Prophet: The Life and Times of Bayard Rustin**, John D'Emilio, Free Press  
 4 **Original Youth: The True Story of Edmund White's Boyhood**, Keith Fleming, Green Candy Press  
 3 **Siegfried Sasson: The Journey from the Trenches**, Jean Moorcroft Wilson, Routledge  
 2 **That Furious Lesbian: The Story of Mercedes de Acosta**, Robert A. Schanke Southern Illinois University Press  
 1 **Beautiful Shadow: A Life of Patricia Highsmith**, Andrew Wilson Bloomsbury  
 (4 of 5)

## Children's/Young adult

- 5 **Geography Club**, Bret Hartinger, HarperCollins  
 4 **Keeping You a Secret**, Julie Anne Peters, Little Brown  
 3 **Boy Meets Boy**, David Levithan, Random House  
 2 **Rainbow High**, Alex Sanchez, Simon & Schuster  
 1 **Pebble in a Pool**, William Taylor, Alyson  
 (4 of 5)

## Erotica

Because the anthology I edit, **Best Gay Erotica**, was on the long-list of nominees, I had no opinion for the Lambda folks - but I really liked the collections by Ian Philips, Greg Wharton, and Shaun Levin ... none of which were nominated.

## Humor

- 5 **Chelsea Boys**, Glen Hanson & Allan Neuwirth, Alyson  
 4 **Dykes and Sundry Other Carbon Based Life Forms to Watch Out For**, Alison Bechdel, Alyson  
 3 **That's Why They're in Cages, People!**, Joel Perry, Alyson  
 2 **Men are Pigs, But We Love Bacon**, Michael Alvear, Kensington  
 1 **Sex, Lies, and Stereotypes**, Kim Ficera, Kensington  
 (4 of 5)

## Romance

- 5 **Last Summer**, Michael Thomas Ford, Kensington  
 4 **Maybe Next Time**, Karin Kallmaker, Bella  
 3 **He's the One**, Timothy James Beck, Kensington  
 2 **Best Lesbian Love Stories 2003**, ed. by Angela Brown,

## Alyson

1 **They Say She Tastes Like Honey**, Michelle Sawyer, Alyson  
(4 of 5)

## SF/Fantasy

5 **Vampire Thrall**, Michael Schiefelbein, Alyson

4 **Masters of Midnight: Erotic Tales of the Vampire**, Michael Thomas Ford, Jeff Mann, William J. Mann and Sean Wolfe, Kensington

3 **Stars: Original Stories Based On the Songs of Janis Ian**, ed. by Janis Ian & Mike Resnick, Tor

2 **The Red Line of Yarmald**, Diana Rivers, Bella

1 **The Substance of God: A Spiritual Thriller**, Perry Brass, Belhue Press

(3 of 5)

## Religion/Spirituality

5 **Keeping Faith**, Fenton Johnson, Houghton Mifflin

4 **The Man Jesus Loved: Homoerotic Narratives from the New Testament**, Theodore W. Jennings Jr., The Pilgrim Press

3 **Gay Witchcraft: Empowering the Tribe**, Christopher Penczak, Samuel Weiser

2 **Reconciling Journey: A Devotional Workbook for Gay and Lesbian Christians**, Michal Anne Pepper, The Pilgrim Press

1 **Gay Perspective**, Toby Johnson, Alyson

(4 of 5)

## LGBT Studies

5 **Queer Street: Rise and Fall of an American Culture 1947-1985**, James McCourt, W.W. Norton

4 **Strapped for Cash**, Mack Friedman, Alyson

3 **Drag Queens at the 801 Cabaret**, Leila J. Rupp & Verta Taylor, University of Chicago

2 **Butterflies Will Burn: Prosecuting Sodomites in Early Modern Spain and Mexico**, Federico Garza Carvajal, University of Texas

1 **Touching Feeling: Affect, Pedagogy, Performativity**, Eve Kosofsky Sedgwick Duke University

(2 of 5)

## Drama

There were only five titles nominated, so all five are finalists.

## Transgender/GenderQueer

5 **She's Not There: A Life in Two Genders**, Jennifer Finney Boylan, Broadway Books

4 **Transsexualism: Illusions and Reality**, Colette Chiland, Wesleyan University

3 **Transgender Journeys**, Virginia Ramey Mollenkott and

Vanessa Sheridan, The Pilgrim Press

2 **The Man Who Would Be Queen: The Science of Gender-Bending and Transsexualism**, J. Michael Bailey, Joseph Henry Pres

1 **The Drag King Anthology**, ed. by Donna Troka Harrington Park

(4 of 5)

Visual Arts/Photography

5 **Familiar Men**, Laurie Toby Edison, Shifting Focus Press

4 **Red Threads: The South Asian Queer Connection in Photographs**, Poulomi Desai & Parminder Sekhon, Millivres

3 **Vacation in Ibiza**, Lawrence Schimel & Sebas, NBM-Eurotica

2 **Women Seeing Women**, ed. by Lonthar Schirmer, W.W. Norton

1 **A Face in the Crowd**, ed. John Peterson and Martain Bedogne, Matthew Shepard Foundation

(4 of 5)

### The Long List From Which the Finalists Were Selected

(Original typos intact; the "additions" were added by the finalist's panel if we thought a deserving title hadn't been submitted by the author, the publisher, or the public at large.)

There are well over 300 books on this list; a few are self-published vanities, some are just plain bad, and many are of marginal use. But there are also a breathtaking number of fine, fine books that weren't chosen as finalists - Maureen Brady, Rebecca Brown, and Carla Tomaso from lesbian fiction; Edmund White, John Sam Jones, John Rechy, Matt Sycamore Bernstein, Joseph Olshan, Brian Bouldrey, Mark Merlis, Louis Bayard, and Bart Yates from gay fiction; and too many excellent works to list here from the ill-defined LGBT Studies category - the category most in need of refining.

(And while it makes great good sense to keep separate categories for lesbian fiction and gay fiction, I've never been sure why the poetry and mystery categories haven't been blended, as is the case with every other category. I haven't been to a Lambda Literary Awards banquet for a few years now, but I remember several ceremonies that dragged on and on ... and on ... and on; it couldn't hurt to have fewer categories.)

Here's the "raw" data: gasp over the books that were overlooked, wonder why anyone bothered submitting any given title, marvel at the range of topics we queers write about . . .

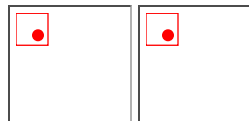
Click here for [The Long List](#) from which the finalists were

selected:

[back to top](#)

## And Speaking of Winners: The Stonewall Awards

The American Library Association's Gay, Lesbian, Bisexual and Transgendered Round Table announced this year's winners of the Stonewall Book Awards, which will be presented at the 2004 ALA Annual Conference in Orlando, June 24-30. Each year, ABA's GLBT Round Table honors one work of fiction (The Barbara Gittings Literature Award) and one work of nonfiction (The Israel Fishman Nonfiction Award), as well as four honorable mentions in each of the two categories. The winners:



### **Fiction**

**The Book of Salt**, by Monique Truong

### **Nonfiction**

**The Lost Prophet: The Life and Times of Bayard Rustin**, by John D. Emilio

### **Honorable Mentions for Fiction**

**Cutting Room**, by Louise Welsh (Canongate Books)

**Keeping You a Secret**, by Julie Ann Peters

**Lives Of The Circus Animals**, by Christopher Bram

**Southland**, by Nina Revoyr

### **Honorable Mentions for Nonfiction:**

**Beautiful Shadow: A Life Of Patricia Highsmith**, by Andrew Wilson

**Before Stonewall: Activists For Gay And Lesbian Rights In Historical**

**Context**, edited by Vern L. Bullough (Harrington Park Press)

**Intertwined Lives: Margaret Mead, Ruth Benedict And**

**Their Circle**, by Lois W. Banner (Alfred A Knopf).

**Ridiculous!: The Theatrical Life And Times Of Charles**

**Ludlam**, by David

Kaufman (Applause)

And for [a list of past winners](#) – all the way back to 1971, when Isabel Miller's **Patience and Sarah** was the honored title, click [here](#).

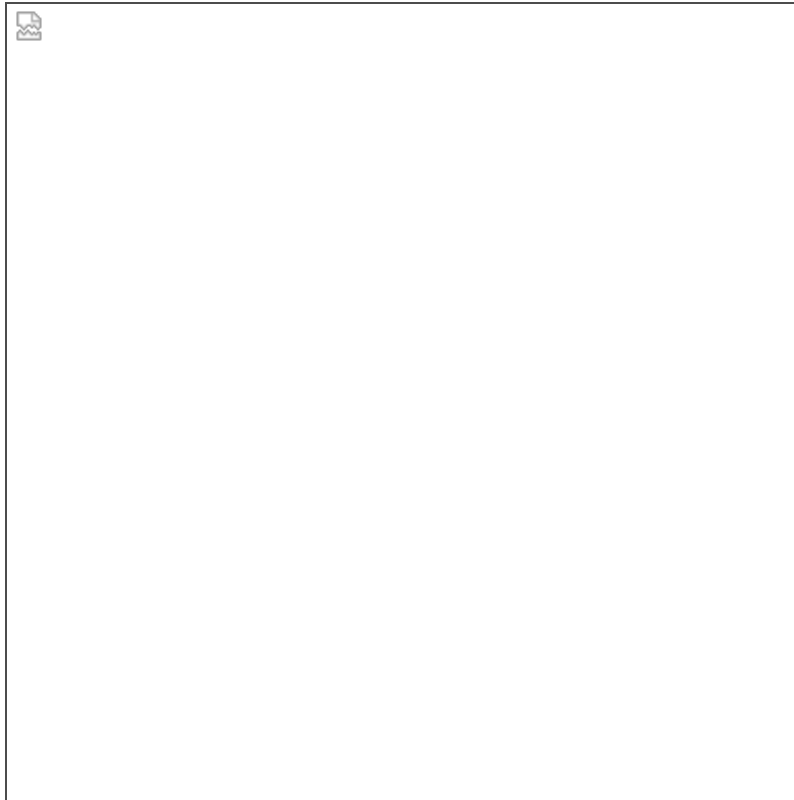
[back to top](#)

## Wedding Belles

I write with some insight about gay weddings - in October 2003, I married my partner of 11 years, Asa Liles. It was a real wedding: I have the wedding permit issued by the nonplussed ("two same-sex licenses in one day; my goodness, this is a first for me") and entirely civil town clerk of Renfrew, Ontario, the 6,000-population urban center closest to the very rural farm where the wedding took place; I have the official wedding certificate issued soon after by the Province of Ontario; Asa and I were wed by a retired minister of the Unitarian Church, a lesbian who, with her partner, has adopted children; and, rounding out the splendid experience, we were joined the same weekend by two

American couples, old friends from Los Angeles (Danny Acosta and Ruben Chavez, who got their license in Ottawa, where there had already been several same-sex permits issued), and Ken White and Mark Freeman, who joined Asa and I in Renfrew for our official sanction to indulge in the ceremony).

**Above/right: The ceremony, with Best Dog, Percy, looking on. Below: A chorus line of queer couples: Asa Liles, Richard, Mark Freeman, Ken White, Danny Acosta, and Ruben Chavez.**



It was a splendid weekend, unexpectedly balmy for Canada's Thanksgiving, a time of year when chill winds are often whipping dead leaves around the ankles. There were 50 guests on hand at Marlborough Farm, a 200-acre property I've owned co-operatively with several college friends for nearly 30 years - including elderly Arnold Jastremski, the German-immigrant neighbor farmer who runs his cattle on our pastures; the teenage children of an old friend's partner from Lexington, Kentucky; an elderly gay couple from Ottawa who have been partners for more than 30 years; and Asa's mother, Emilie Noble, from Nashville, Tennessee. And it's why I'm reading a number of new books about the struggle for wedding rights in America less abstractly than I might.


The most gripping of the recent reads is **Civil Wars: Gay Marriage in America** (Harcourt), by David Moats, whose editorials in support of Vermont's civil unions legislation won him and his newspaper a Pulitzer. Moats has a good journalist's insatiable curiosity, so the book - touted appropriately by the publisher as "a remarkable drama of democracy at work on a human scale" - is packed with mesmerizing detail; he's also an often-staged playwright, an able practitioner of a craft that infuses an essentially political story with uncommon personality and humanity.

Moats focuses almost totally on the Vermont story, but his quietly epic examination of how civil unions came to be the law of that small state has wider implications for the freedom-

to-marry forces in America, both in the wake of the pro-wedding ruling by the Supreme Judicial Court in Massachusetts a few months ago, and also in the face of what's sure to be the virulent demagoguery around gay marriage by George W. Bush's handlers in election year 2004.

"... it was also by chance that I happened to witness the story of civil unions in Vermont. I did not come to the issue as a gay man. I came to it as a journalist discovering the most extraordinary story I had ever covered," Moats writes in his prologue.

"I had gay and lesbian friends, of course, and, like anyone who manages to look beyond the distinctions of sexual orientation, I was able to see a truth that becomes increasingly plain as the curtains of bias are pulled aside. When love shows up it does not always obey arbitrary social conventions. It is up to us to follow where it leads. If it is love, it will not be sinful, abusive, or otherwise wrong." That blessedly simple, essentially profound sentiment is the beating heart of **Civil Wars**, a book of as much primary importance to the issue of same-sex marriage – though lower-keyed – as Allan Berube's **Coming Out Under Fire** was about gays in the military or Randy Shilts' **And the Band Plays On** was about the early days of AIDS.

 Moats universalizes the topic of civil unions and gay marriage by focusing on the local; Davina Kotulski's **Why You Should Give a Damn About Gay Marriage**, which will be published by Advocate Books in April 2004, is a more polemical presentation of succinct arguments that hopes to "open the eyes of even the staunchest foe of gay marriage" – an overly optimistic ambition, I'd say, given the hysterical under-siege mentality of the right wing; Evan Wolfson's **Why Marriage Matters**, scheduled for the same month from Simon and Schuster, connects gay marriage to other equality movements, a sensibly honorable linkage Moats makes in more personal and less historical and legalistic language; also in April – I guess June isn't the month for queer wedding ... books – comes Jonathan Rauch's **Gay Marriage: Why It Is Good for Gays, Good for Straights, and Good for America**, from Times Books; and in a self-help vein, there is David Toussaint's **The Gay and Lesbian Wedding Guide**, coming later in the year from Ballantine – a step-by-step look at wedding planning, from where to buy the flowers, to types of commitment ceremonies, to how to tell Aunt Betty you're gay before the big day.

More specific to my own marriage is a book already published – **Just Married: Gay Marriage and the Expansion of**

**Human Rights**, by Kevin Bourassa and Joe Varnell (from Doubleday in Canada, from the University of Wisconsin in the U.S.) It's a riveting first-hand account of their January, 2001 wedding in Toronto's Metropolitan Community Church, and the subsequent legal process which resulted in Ontario's Supreme Court okaying same-sex wedding licenses in June, 2003. Asa and I were married four months later; now we're starting the process of obtaining legal residency for him here in Canada, as my spouse . . .



*For more info:*

Davina Kotulski is active with Marriage Equality California - <http://www.marriageequalityca.org/home.php>

There's a dated but interesting interview with David Moats about winning the Pulitzer for his same-sex supporting editorials (with celebratory photos) -

<http://journalism.smcvt.edu/echo/12.11.02/David%20Moats.htm>

Evan Wolfson has founded an organization committed to the freedom to marry - [http://www.geocities.com/freedomtomarry/ftm\\_homepage.htm](http://www.geocities.com/freedomtomarry/ftm_homepage.htm)

Jonathan Rauch is profiled here, with links to many of his columns for The National Journal, including several on gay marriage -

<http://www.indegayforum.org/authors/rauch/>


And Kevin Bourassa and Joe Varnell are celebrated for their pioneering queer marriage efforts in Canada, here -

<http://www.samesexmarriage.ca/bios/>



[back to top](#)

## The first essential reading of 2004

 It's awfully early in the year to pick a book as a "best" - but it's no stretch to dub **Queer Ideas** an early contender as one of the most essential books of 2004. The Feminist Press title contains the first 10 lectures in "The David R. Kessler Lectures in Lesbian and Gay Studies," an annual presentation of quite thrilling queer thinking organized by the Center for Lesbian and Gay Studies (CLAGS). Joan Nestle was the debut speaker in 1992, talking about the life of the black lesbian Mabel Hampton ("as told by a white woman") - a factual and



emotional glimpse of one common woman's heroic life; Judith Butler's 2001 talk confronts issues of grief, mourning, AIDS deaths, the aftermath of 9/11, and human rights, all with profound immediacy.

Over the years, Edmund White talked in 1993, at the height of the so-called "boom" in gay publishing, with an insider's gentle savvy about gay fiction; Barbara Smith talked in 1994, with deep knowledge and stirring passion, about African American lesbian and gay history - an area much less honored then than more recently; Monique Wittig talked in 1995 - well, in truth, read from - her book **Virgile, non**, at that time unpublished in America; Esther Newton talked in 1996 with sharp humor about her journey towards butch identity; Samuel R. Delany talked in 1997 about mourning the banishing of sex, and the communities that thrive around sex, from Times Square; Eve Kosofsky Sedgwick talked in 1998 about love, a scintillating, challenging dialogue with herself ; John D'Emilio talked in 1999 about "wrestling with the subject of" gay civil rights activist Bayard Rustin, a behind-the-biography look at his award-winning 2003 book, **Lost Prophet**; and Cherrie Moraga talked in 2000 of "the changing consciousness of" her life as an activist Chicana lesbian.

Some of the lectures are conversational in tone, loose and rambling as well as bright and knowledgeable; others read like classroom lectures, bristling with brilliance and sprinkled with footnotes. **Queer Ideas** represents a rainbow spectrum of original thinking, personal experience, and queer passion; this collection of a decade of queer wisdom is an invaluable primer of excellence.

*For more info:*

Learn about CLAGS [here](#)



[back to top](#)

## The Andy Warhol (Mythology) Factory

There is definitely life after death, and the recent spate of Warholiana stands as proof. Two of the best books delve broadly (into Warhol's frenetic Factory scene) and obsessively (into just one of Warhol's hundreds of experimental films).

Steven Watson's lavish **Factory Made: Warhol and the**



**Sixties** (Pantheon) is an entertaining, incisive, and encyclopedic survey of the early years of Pop Art, party people, and the birth of the Play-house of the Ridiculous; Roy Grundmann's **Andy Warhol's**

**Blow Job** (Temple University Press) is a triumphant study of just one of Warhol's more infamous (and least-seen) films. The Watson book is busy with fascinating photos, written with sympathetic wit, and gets past Warhol-centric mythology to explore what was for a time a lusciously collaborative moment in time. The Grundmann book focuses with exquisite academic intensity on a 36-minute silent film, shot in one take 40 years ago, depicting the shadowed face and occasionally the leather-jacketed upper torso of a young man, leaning against a brick wall, who may or may not be having his cock sucked. What both books do wonderfully is encapsulate Warhol's world, exploring it intimately and then turning it inside out for a heady discussion of queer theory, cultural history, and the transgression of sexuality's boundaries.



In my bookseller days, I used to enjoy chatting with young men - hardly ever women - looking for then out-of-print copies of Warhol's **A: A Novel**, or asking for **The Philosophy of Andy Warhol** or **The Andy Warhol Diaries**. There was quite a constant stream of them - not as many boys-in-black as sought out the work of Jean Genet, William Burroughs, and eventually Michel Foucault, but enough that I wondered when Warhol would cross over from dead artist of soup cans and Marilyn Monroe into eternal-bibliography icon. Given that the novel, the diaries, and the philosophy are now back in print, and that there have been several books about him in recent months, he appears to have made the grade.

As in: for anyone with fond memories of the monosyllabic Warhol of the early *Interview* magazine, anticipate **I'll Be Your Mirror: The Selected Andy Warhol Interviews, 1962-1987**, edited by Kenneth Goldsmith; it's a collection, coming in July from Carroll and Graff, of Warhol utterances, mutterings, and conversations, several never before published, the rest from magazines as varied as *Art News* and *Mademoiselle*.

A book titled *The Autobiography of Andy Warhol*: boring! Hence the more provocatively titled **The Autobiography and Sex Life of Andy Warhol**, by John Wilcock, based on "interviews with Warhol's friends, superstars, art dealers, and critics." That's according to information from Christopher Trela of Trela Inc., a new publisher; no mention, in the release, of sex partners spilling the beans, though - or even when the book is due. Wilcock spurred Warhol to start *Interview* magazine (first called *INTER/View*), and in 1971 wrote an article with the same provocative title in his own East Village paper, *Other Voices*, out of which he spun a self-published little book that back then promised much more than it delivered. Treva himself has been immersed in the pop and the hip - he contributed to several of

RE/Search Publications' "*Incredibly Strange*" books in the 1990s, a series about oddball movie, music, and other cultural moments, and edited **Pranks!**; he then produced two irony-laced Virgin Music collections of lounge and cocktail music - a genealogy suggesting that the forthcoming autobiography, even if the reprint contains new material, will shy away from the serious.

And to cite three more examples of the burgeoning Factory industry: 2003 saw the publication of Richard Polsky's art-insider account of the trick-mirror world of original Warhol prints and paintings, **I Bought Andy Warhol** (Harry N. Abrams); of David McCabe's **A Year in the Life of Andy Warhol** (Phaidon), collecting 450 of the more than 2,500 photos the then-young British photographer shot in 1964-1965; and most eccentrically, of Warhol nephew James Warhola's children's book (ages 1-4) **Uncle Andy**, about his family's relationship with the artist.

Long live Andy.

*For more info:*

Stephen Watson has a whole website about himself and his book, including material cut from the book because the darn thing was getting too long -

<http://www.factorymade.org/index.html>

David McCabe discusses his book, and singles out eight photos

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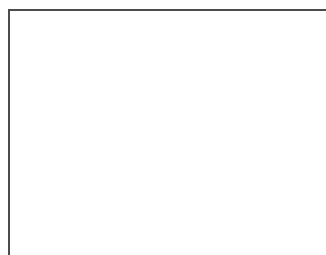
<http://www.guardian.co.uk/arts/gallery/0,8542,1093743,00.html>

James Warhola has a website, too, all about his family and his art -

<http://www.audart.com/warhol/Artists/warhola.htm>



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