



In this issue...

- [Several Months Worth of Books To Watch Out For...](#)
- [...And Some Verse Vice](#)
- [A Few Books I Intend to Read](#)
- [Two New Books Celebrate Capote's 80th](#)
- [Fresh & Feisty Rechy: This Month's www.](#)
- [Joseph Hansen, Blogger](#)
- [Four Irish Fellows, Writing](#)
- [Cowboy Sex Goes under the Covers](#)
- [From Our Publishers: The Alyson Catalogue](#)
- [Off the 'Net: Leavitt, Ford, Galanes, and 100 Bests](#)
- [Bestsellers from Our Bookstores: Atlanta's Outwrite](#)
- [Printer-friendly version](#)

The Gay Men's Edition

July 2004
Volume 1 Number 8

By Richard Labonte

Books (and an Editor) To Watch Out For

The queer profile of midsize publisher Carroll & Graf is expanding dramatically, as newly hired editor Don Weise - formerly of Cleis Press, home of the "Best (assorted) Erotica" anthologies as well as good queer studies, women's, and fiction titles - readies several books for publication. Among fall titles: **Fresh Men: New Voices in Gay Fiction**, a collection edited by Weise and selected by Edmund White, focusing on authors not previously published in book form; **Freedom in the Village: Black Gay Men's Writing, 1969 to the Present**; **Beneath the Skin: The Collected Essays of John Rechy**; and **Moe's Villa and Other Stories**, by James Purdy. Early next year, look for debut fiction from Vestal McIntyre, Keith McDermott, and Barry McCrea, as well as (see [BTWOF #6](#)) **Beyond the Down Low**, by Keith Boykin, whose nonfiction study includes a look at media hype around "the DL." Books by Edward Albee, Charles Busch, and Daniel Harris are in the works...

Weetzie Bat has grown up; the gay-friendly pixy-like high school girl burst into young-adult celebrity in Francesca Lia Block's revered 1989 novel; she returns next year in **Necklace of Kisses** (HarperCollins), Block's first adult novel, as a 40-year-old confronting a midlife crisis. Hoping to regain the magic that once blessed her life - and her many gay friends - she escapes to a pink Beverly Hills hotel where magical creatures (a fawn bellhop, a dress-knitting spider, a captured mermaid) show her the way home...

Harrowing and humorous - that's the pitch for **Mississippi Sissy**, a memoir coming from St. Martin's about growing up gay in the South, by *Vanity Fair* contributor Kevin Sessums, who has profiled everyone from Johnny Depp to Geena Davis - and whose article, in the very first issue of POZ Magazine, about fucking Barry Goldwater's gay grandson, is recalled here: http://www.poz.com/index.cfm?p=article&art_id=3367...

A malicious little novel: that's the premise promised by Mike Albo, author of the darkly comic queer coming-out novel *Hornito: My Lie Life*, for his forthcoming novel **The Underminer** (Bloomsbury); his second book features an annoyingly cheerful and calculatingly callous overachiever, a character who has cropped up in the New York's mediacentric weekly, the *New York Observer*, and on the public radio program *This American Life*...

Douglas A. Martin's first novel, **Outline of My Lover** - based loosely on his romance with R.E.M.'s Michael Stipe - caused tongues to wag when edgy Soft Skull Press published it a few years ago; now Martin has sold "a rule-bending" collection of stories, due out next year, to the Terrace Books imprint of University of Wisconsin Press, home to such authors as Michael



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.

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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The Gay Men's Edition

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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More Books for Women

will launch in 2004.

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Klein, Brian Bouldrey, and Rebecca Brown...

William J. Mann's **Edge of Midnight: The Life of John Schlesinger** is coming later this year from Billboard Books; also look for **Gay Pride: A Celebration of All Things Gay and Lesbian**, a November book of lists from Kensington/Citadel Books. Mann is also the judge for my **Best Gay Erotica 2005**, scheduled for December from Cleis...

Fans of the bestselling six-volume **Tales of the City** series have long lusted for a sequel. In 2006, they'll get one – sort of – in **Michael Tolliver Lives**; Armistead Maupin says the novel is "independent of **Tales**" – though it will follow one day in the life of the now 52-year-old fictional gay gardener whose hunky good looks, affable good cheer, and inspirational resilience were the core of the series; coming from HarperCollins, Maupin's longtime publisher...

Gay astrologers, gay gardeners, gay baseball players, gay fermented food mavens, gay yoga teachers, gay witches - and now, gay psychics. Some time next year - the inner voices aren't telling me exactly when, nor is the Rodale Books web site - look for 26-year-old psychic Dougall Fraser's first book, **But You Knew That Already**, a memoir of coming out, both as a psychic and as a gay man, combined with a humorous (says the press release) behind-the-scenes look at the psychic industry and a guide to developing your own psychic ability.

Canadian novelist Darren Greer's **Still Life With June**, a darkly comic novel compared by one reviewer (not me, but I'll agree) to "an East Coast Confederacy of Dunces" about an aspiring writer who takes on another man's identity while searching for inspiration, is coming next year from St. Martin's; it was published, with limited trans-border distribution, by Canada's Cormorant Books in May of 2003, and released in Canada in paper in July. Also from Cormorant, in October: **Strange Ghosts: Literary Essays**, by Darren Greer - from baseball to Picasso, Oscar Wilde to Tennessee Williams, post-modernism to American foreign policy, essays that mix polemic, politics, memoir, travelogue, and literary theory.

Much on marriage: **I Do/I Don't**, an anthology considering both sides of the gay marriage debate, is scheduled for fall from Suspect Thoughts Press, with possible contributions from the likes of Christopher Bram, Dorothy Allison, Marshal Moore, Tommi Avicolli Mecca, Meredith Maran, and dozens more...

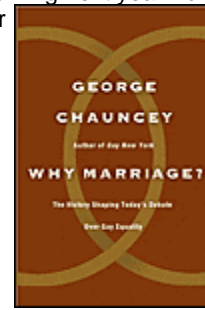
More on marriage: in October, from Algonquin Books, comes **The M Word: Writers on Same-Sex Marriage**, edited by Kathy Pories, with essays by well-known queer writers Dan Savage, Stacey D'Erasmus, David Leavitt, Alexander Chee, and Jim Grimsley; oddly, however, the catalog copy highlights three non-gay (though undeniably gay-friendly) writers: Francine Prose (on what would have happened if Oscar Wilde had married his lover); George Saunders (a snippy bit of humor reprinted from *The New Yorker* on the need to outlaw "Sameish-Sex Marriage"); and Wendy Brenner (on being the maid of honor at a gay wedding). There are 10 essays in the book, and Michael Parker is the ninth contributor – he's also straight, but he writes beautifully in his new novel **Virginia Lovers** about a family coping with a gay son (and is interviewed here:

<http://www1.gotriad.com/article/articleview/8493/1/49/>). The tenth contributor? Who knows? He or she isn't noted in the Algonquin catalog, and the publisher's web site is out of date. Straight or gay? Let's guess queer, for orientation balance...



Still with the marriage thing: **We Do: Portraits of Gay Marriage**, edited by Amy Rennert, is just out from Chronicle Books, featuring photographs of happy queer couples, inspired by San Francisco's revolutionary peal of springtime wedding bells). Historian George Chauncey has set aside work on his sequel to *Gay New*

York to rush-write **Why Marriage? The History Shaping Today's Debate Over Gay Equality**, due in August from Basic Books. Coming next year from Miramax: **Another World Is Possible**, a political memoir by Green Party Mayor Jason West of New Paltz, N.Y., who flirted with jail time for performing a number of same-sex marriages this spring; and for wedding belles and beaus with an urge for information - and who aren't planning their ceremony before early 2005 - **The Survival Guide to Gay Weddings** is coming from St. Martin's Press, assembled by the gay brother/lesbian sister team K.C. David and Dawn Kohn, as a spin-off of www.gayweddings.com, the website they set up to facilitate Vermont civil unions...



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[back to top](#)

Verse Vices:

*My god! Coming soon
we queers are everywhere;
"gay life haiku" (giggle).*

Coming soon would be Joel Derfner's **Gay Haiku**, said by the publisher, Broadway Books, to be "a humorous collection" of poems reflecting contemporary gay life. The classical haiku follows a relatively rigid format of three lines of five, seven, and five syllables, demanding a discipline that possibly adds a veneer of sophistication to the book. That can't be said of a previous collection of formula poetry, Donald Dimock's bawdy 1995 book, *Limericks Modern and Gay*: "There was a young fellow named Tucker/ Who, instructing a novice cock..." You get the idea...

PS: The haiku I "composed" to lead into the above item prompted Lawrence Schimmel, who has both been paid for his poetry, and also edited fine collections of verse, to provide me with these two far more polished samples:

*We're here, we're queer, we're
brief. And I don't mean Calvin
Klein. Gay verse out soon.*

*Gay snapshot moments
in verse, like cloth-covered bulge
promising more.*

It's not a Book To Watch Out **For** because it's already in hand - but it fits nicely into this section on haiku and limericks: Thomas Rangdale's **Nasty Sonnets Descended From Shakespeare** (Antares Press, \$12.95). I'm not sure of an audience for the book - obsessive collectors of anything with the keywords "gay" and "poetry," I suppose; fans of unusual smut-delivery systems; and anyone looking for a truly offbeat gift for a weirdly literate friend. Its flavor can be readily discerned from a perusal of a few titles from the table of contents - Just Plain Bill, Bizarre Rules, Eat Me, The Barbie Tease, A Mary Soul, I Sing of Shit, Limp Thing... you get the drift. Rangdale's verse is occasionally crude and often rude, but he does touch all the sexual LGBTQ bases, and he does hew well enough to the sonnet form. Here's one of his less rude poems:

BIZARRE RULES
*My rule is, if you can't be beautiful
then be bizarre, 'cause beauty's fleeting fast,
depends on who takes note. It's pitiful
to hold that mirror 'til your youth has past,
maintaining charm with every breath. Oh hell.*

*It takes too damn much energy. Besides,
no fucking fun. Much better to dispel
the notion, cultivate the worst inside
and let it all hang out. They'll notice you
and your great faults and won't feel envious.
I think you'll make more friends this way. And screw
them if they laugh at you. Be venomous.
They say beauty's only skin deep. Shit!
The dragon underneath is infinite.*
Author info: <http://www.nastysonnets.com/about.htm>

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[back to top](#)

Some Books To Catch Up To: Enticing Catalog Copy

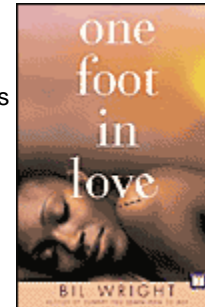
These are a few books I mean to read, based on what I've read elsewhere:

Collage, by Ted Wojtasik (Livingston, \$14.95)

"What do you say to a young man who is dying? And if that young man is dying of AIDS and was your lover whom you've left one year past, what do you then do? In Ted Wojtasik's complex novel of gay love, the problem isn't one of coming out of the closet - it's one of maturing into responsible love. And Wojtasik superbly mixes the unlikely combinations of Central European history, Admiral Peary's North Pole Expedition, the artistry of collage, a cross-dressing singer, an upcoming gay playwright thwarted by the national onset of AIDS, and homoerotic love into just such a life object lesson for his young protagonist, Zee." ("A compelling experiment that packs emotional punch," said *Publishers Weekly*).

One Foot in Love, by Bil Wright (Touchstone, \$12)

" Four years ago, Bil Wright's debut novel, *Sunday You Learn How to Box*, about a 14-year-old coming of age black and poor in the 1960s and coming to terms with his gay identity, heralded the coming of a talented new writer. He returns with *One Foot in Love*, about Rowtina Washington, 40 years old and recently widowed, who finds comfort in the inexplicable visits of her late husband's spirit. When the visits one day end, Rowtina reluctantly joins the Leave Him and Live Sisterhood, an unlikely support group, and begins learning how to live and love all over again in the company of women."



Author info: <http://www.bilwright.com/OneFootPage/OneFoot.htm>

The Smallest People Alive, by Keith Banner (Carnegie Mellon University, \$16.95)

" Keith Banner writes about people and situations many times ignored by other fiction writers. These are stories focused on lives outside the mainstream, and yet they are invested with precision, tenderness and artistry. The title story, awarded an O. Henry Prize, chronicles the lives of two boyhood friends, one recovering from a suicide attempt, the other trying to figure out how he can help. In their stumbling allegiance to each other, they find a sort of solace. Other stories in *The Smallest People Alive* involve two gentlemen with mental disabilities preparing for their wedding, a janitor working late hours dreaming of revenge, and a gay teenager taking the night off from Burger King to search for the body of his murdered cousin." ("Sears and surprises... read like small revelations, perhaps because they focus on people usually ignored in gay fiction - rural, low-income, overweight, largely uneducated folks with dead-end or thankless jobs; they might call themselves "white trash," but Banner gives them a dark and fragile dignity," said *Publishers Weekly*.)



Read a Banner short story here: <http://www.lodestarquarterly.com/work/209/>

The Judgment of Caesar: A Novel of Ancient Rome, by Steven Saylor
(St. Martin's, \$24.95)

"It is 48 B.C. For years now, the rival Roman generals Caesar and Pompey have engaged in a contest for world domination. Both now turn to Egypt, where Pompey plans a last desperate stand on the banks of the Nile, while Caesar's legendary encounter with queen Cleopatra will spark a romance that reverberates down the centuries. But Egypt is a treacherous land, torn apart by the murderous rivalry between the goddess-queen and her brother King Ptolemy. Into this hothouse atmosphere of intrigue and deception comes Gordianus the Finder, innocently seeking a cure for his wife Bethesda in the sacred waters of the Nile. But when his plans go awry, he finds himself engaged in an even more desperate pursuit - to prove the innocence of the son he once disowned, who stands accused of murder." ("Perhaps this superb historical novel will be the breakthrough Saylor richly deserves," said *Publishers Weekly*.)

Author info: <http://www.stevensaylor.com/>

Author interview: <http://www.publishersweekly.com/article/CA416000.html?pubdate=5%2F10%2F2004&display=archive>

Aaron Travis, the other side of Steven Saylor:

<http://www.stevensaylor.com/AaronTravis/>

The Donor, by Frank M. Robinson (*Forge*, \$24.95)

"You've heard the urban legend about a man who wakes up in a tub of ice in a hotel room with a kidney missing. In fact, organ thefts are a real phenomenon and the occurrence of the crime is on the increase. The legend comes to life in this dramatic and scary story ripped from the headlines of tomorrow's newspaper. Dennis, a college-age young man and an adoptee, wakes up in a small private hospital in San Francisco after a minor car accident to discover that one of his organs is missing. He's an involuntary transplant donor. He flees to a municipal hospital, only to learn that this is the second organ to be harvested from him. He runs for his life. Clearly someone, somewhere, is a close match for him, needs his organs, and knows his every move. The next time, he might lose his heart or lungs. He won't wake up after that. Dennis heads home to Boston to confront his adoptive father, who seems to have forged his name to a donor card. And so the hunt is on: Dennis must find his harvester before the harvester finds him again." ("...creepy new thriller hits the ground running... a gripping tale," said *Publishers Weekly*.)



An interview about SF:

<http://www.locusmag.com/1999/Issues/06/RobinsonF.html>

A book containing an essay about Robinson and Harvey Milk:

<http://www.gaysunshine.com/lpnewandrecent.html>

Shameless, by Paul Burston (*Warner Books*, \$14 paper)

First published two years ago in Britain: "Martin is not a happy bunny. His boyfriend of four years has run off and left him for a male prostitute. His best friend John is too busy looking for sex on the internet to offer much in the way of support. His gal pal Caroline is convinced that her own boyfriend is a closet case. And to top it all, Martin's hippie father is threatening to come and stay, armed with an entire library of self-help books on how to be gay, happy, and free of shame. So Martin does what every out and proud gay man in London is encouraged to do: he jumps head first into hedonism. He joins a gym, and throws himself into the gay club scene, a world of drugs and muscles, hard bodies and harder music, one-night stands and three-way sex. Increasingly desperate in his search for Mr. Right, he settles for Mr. Right Now. But it isn't long before Martin begins to weary of the shallower aspects of the scene." (...sprightly, feisty debut... a brisk beach read," said *Publishers Weekly*.)

Burston's 10 "Favourite" Gay Books:

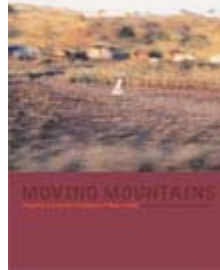
<http://books.guardian.co.uk/top10s/top10/0,6109,523071,00.html>

(PS - *Queens*, by Pickles, is one of my personal all-time bests.)

And for a taste of Burston's sense of humor:

http://www.pinkfinance.com/c_contributors/c_p_burston_index.html

Moving Mountains: The Race to Treat Global AIDS, by Anne-christine D'Adesky (Verso, \$30)



"In dispatches written from around the world, Anne-christine D'Adesky reports on the greatest challenge facing us today: the global effort to provide lifesaving medicines and care to 40 million people living with HIV and AIDS in resource-poor countries, the great majority in sub-Saharan Africa. She analyzes the obstacles to providing universal access to antiretroviral drugs whose cost has been out of reach to millions until now, and she exposes the underlying and often competing agendas of donor and recipient governments, funders, activists and individuals with

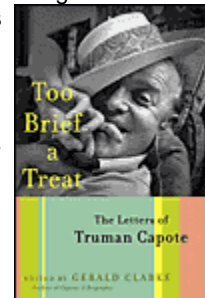
HIV who are struggling to survive. In lively, in-depth field reports from Cuba, Brazil, Russia, Haiti, Thailand, South Africa, China and Haiti, pilot and national treatment programs are serving as models and provide a litmus test of the feasibility of HIV and AIDS treatment in settings of abject poverty, underdevelopment, economic and political instability." ("...a more complete overview of this deadly crisis would be hard to find," said *Publishers Weekly*.)



[back to top](#)

Truman Turns 80: Celebrate with Two New Books

Truman Capote died 20 years ago. He would have been 80 this year, in September - an anniversary that the Modern Library is marking with the release of two new books: **The Complete Short Stories of Truman Capote**, with an introduction by Reynolds Price, and **Too Brief a Treat: The Letters of Truman Capote**, edited by Gerald Clarke. Of the few clearly gay writers of his generation - including James Baldwin, Tennessee Williams, Paul Bowles, and Gore Vidal - only Vidal is still alive, his writing still infused with the kind of arch elegance Capote also embraced. Capote was the most luminous of the lot, and the most flamboyant, but I'm not sure if he's remembered these days for his eloquence and art or for his decadence and decay. The letters ought to be a treat - Clarke is an able Capote biographer who, I assume, has annotated the missives. The well-read will be familiar with the short stories, which have been available in various editions over the years - but the collection does contain one previously-unpublished work, "The Bargain."



Meanwhile, readers of *The New York Times* (print subscribers, and perhaps on-line readers as well) will be able to read *Breakfast at Tiffany's* in serial form - as a 16-page tabloid-sized insert, starting July 26 and running for the following six days. (*The Great Gatsby*, by F. Scott Fitzgerald, started the series on July 12; Laura Esquivel's *Like Water for Chocolate*, August 9, and James McBride's *The Color of Water*, August 23, round it out.) It's an intriguing way of tricking the masses into reading good writing, by giving it away for free in daily doses; and such a careful balance, too - a really white guy, a really white homosexual guy, a woman of color (Latina), and a man of color (black).

The Little Bookroom, an offbeat travel publisher, released a Capote trifle in 2002 - **A House on the Heights**, a 48-page memoir of his pre-glitter life in Brooklyn in the late 1950s: http://www.nybooks.com/shop/product?usca_p=t&product_id=638

A compilation of several familiar photos of Capote as a beautiful young man, paired with brief excerpts from his books, at a gorgeous tribute site:

<http://www.ansoniadesign.com/capote/index.htm>

This quite odd site cites Capote as "A Swingin' Chick of the '60s" - but includes a clever, concise bio:

http://www.swinginchicks.com/truman_capote.htm

Did you know that there's a website devoted to celebrity graves? Or that Capote's Los Angeles crypt is just a few feet from Mel Torme's plot?

<http://www.findagrave.com/cgi-bin/fg.cgi?page=gr&GRid=1175>



[back to top](#)

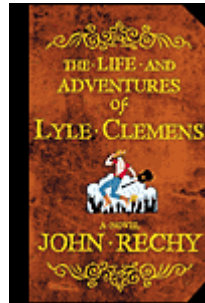
Keeping It Fresh - and Feisty: www.johnrechy.com

There is much fresh literary meat on John Rechy's site - including, most fabulously, an archive of letters he's written to decades of book reviewers and book review editors - most recently, as of this writing, including an April, 2004 letter to Barbara Epstein of *The New York Review of Books*, hearkening back to Alfred Chester's notorious, malicious 1963 review in that magazine of Rechy's *City of Night*. Rechy's exchange with amazon.com over reader reviews and a computer glitch that revealed a review he wrote of his own book also appear, as do many letters to the *New York Times*. Lots of reviews of interesting books, by or about Christopher Isherwood, Ramon Novarro, Gore Vidal, and, most sympathetically, of Kathleen Winsor's work, including *Forever Amber*, on the occasion of her death in 2003. And dozens of essays, including a hilarious takedown of the *Queer Eye for the Straight Guy* guys, titled "The Black Mammies," and an affectionate distillation of "the many ways in which Los Angeles has been imagined, re-imagined, and refracted through the camera lens," a keynote speech delivered at a 2003 conference discussing L.A. - not "Hollywood" - and the movies. All that - plus a photo gallery, a biographical sketch, a bevy of book covers, detailed novel synopses, audio excerpts from a DVD about his life and work... lots to read, and regularly updated by his webmaster. www.johnrechy.com

My Book Marks review, from October, 2003, of Rechy's newest novel:

The Life and Adventures of Lyle Clemens, by John Rechy (Grove Press, \$24)

Most gay readers know Rechy only for his "sexual outlaw" fiction, starting with the 1963 classic *City of Night*. That's a pity. His several less-gay, less-sexual novels, particularly *Marilyn's Daughter* and *Our Lady of Babylon*, are transcendent showcases of his talent for imagining off-kilter worlds - straight as well as gay - centered by moral integrity and artistic vision. That same virtuoso balancing act blesses *The Life and Adventures of Lyle Clemens*, a riotously picaresque philosophical satire that pays homage to, and reinvents, Henry Fielding's *The History of Tom Jones*. Rechy's Lyle, born dirt poor in a dusty Texas town, is a bewitchingly beautiful hormonal hunk of guileless boy and man, desired by women and men, and gentle with both. In his naive search for love, grace, and redemption, he is badly used by a succession of hiss-worthy charlatans. Among them: greedy Pentacostal Bible-thumpers and a has-been movie starlet on the make - representing two of Rechy's favorite targets, the hypocrisy of religion and the hollowness of Hollywood. He skewers both - and much more of contemporary American life - with raucous style in this sprawling, sweet-tempered entertainment.



And here's a 2002 review of a merely functional biography:

Outlaw: The Lives and Careers of John Rechy, by Charles Casillo (Alyson, \$14.95)

John Rechy: living contradiction. Through five decades he has ranked among the more opinionated chroniclers of gay passions - but a decade after 1963's *City of Night* became an indispensable gay classic, he had still not identified himself as a gay man. His public persona as a tight-bodied hustler prowling for self-affirming sexual conquests long overshadowed a private life

of wide-ranging scholarly interests and acclaim as a legendary teacher. And while he bears - uneasily - the mantle of "gay writer," two of his best books (*Our Lady of Babylon*, *The Miraculous Day of Amalia Gomez*) wrestle with religion, race, oppression, and identity well beyond a queer context. Biographer Casillo, an obvious admirer, burrows into the complex, layered life of his subject with appropriate gusto, drawing on interviews with old friends and sex partners, with Rechy himself, and with surviving siblings. But too often *Outlaw*, a gracious and occasionally engrossing biography, reads like an extended magazine article larded with literary analysis. It honors Rechy, but it falls short of truly illuminating an iconic writer's astonishing artistic legacy.



[back to top](#)

Writers in Near-Real Time (Sometimes)

He's 80, and up-to-date: novelist Joseph Hansen (the Dave Brandstetter mysteries, and 30 other books as well) is tired of talking to himself (so he writes), so he's started a blog - a live web log - for venting and opining:

<http://josephhansen.blogspot.com/>

(Good news: Hansen's first two Brandstetter novels, **Fadeout** and **Death Claims**, are back in print in September, part of an ambitious reprint series from the Terrace Books imprint of the University of Wisconsin Press that also, this fall, includes Dodie Bellamy's **The Letters of Mina Harker** (with a new Dennis Cooper foreword), and Leslea Newman's **A Letter to Harvey Milk**.)

Back to the blogs - here are a few more, some maintained with more avidity than others:

Wondering how Scott Heim's new novel is coming along (and does he adore David Sedaris?): <http://www.etherweave.com/scottheim/weblog/index.html>

Michael Lowenthal's last entry (as of late June) is from January - but he has news about writing for a new magazine, *RL*, from Ralph Lauren:

<http://www.etherweave.com/mlowenthal/weblog/index.htm>

Marshall Moore (like Rechy, above) doesn't pretend that he doesn't care about negative (and dumb) reviews; his "live journal" itself links to some fascinating people: <http://www.livejournal.com/users/msminpdx/>

Rob Byrnes (*Trust Fund Boys*) keeps at it daily with pithy observations:

<http://robnyc.blogspot.com/>

"A twentysomething gay novelist and closet romantic toiling in the publishing world and trying to stay true to himself in Manhattan without using a single punctuation mark in this keynote" - see if you can figure out what he's written! <http://accidentalnewyorker.blogspot.com/>

Andrew Sullivan is probably the highest-profile queer blogger (and he's written a few books too); he's disagreeably right wing except when he's - mostly for self-serving reasons - not: <http://www.andrewsullivan.com/>

Canadian queer journalist Joe Clark explains blogs:

<http://www.joeclark.org/weblogs/>



[back to top](#)

Four Fine Irish Lads

Last newsletter, based on a wealth of reviews by others, I raved about a book I hadn't read, Colm Toibin's *The Master*. I've since read it, and loved it - he evokes Henry James without mimicking him, delves into James's skewed sexuality with tender skill, and constructs a possible world based solidly on the real world with dazzling style. After savoring it, I realized that a full third of the 12 gay-interest novels I read in June were by Irish writers; the others were a first novel by Damian McNicholl, a second novel by Keith Ridgway,

and an early novel by Jamie O'Neill, author of the highly acclaimed *At Swim, Two Boys*. Here's what I wrote about the middle two for Book Marks:

A Son Called Gabriel, by *Damian McNicholl* (CDS Books, \$22.95)

Gabriel, the narrator of this spirited novel, is a sensitive 5-year-old in 1964, bullied mercilessly at school and already aware he's not like other boys. By story's end in 1978, he's a sexually active, semi-closeted young queer, facing university and the future with measured self-confidence. Coming-out novels are nothing new, but McNicholl brings unsentimental warmth and engaging realism to his story, and that's part of the appeal of *A Son Called Gabriel*. So is its setting - a Northern Ireland where Protestant oppression clashes increasingly with IRA militancy, where a rigid Catholic culture rules, and where homosexuality is a considerable crime against both God and nature. The comic courage with which Gabriel survives his rough passage through adolescence is a particular grace note. Comparisons to Jamie O'Neill's *At Swim, Two Boys* are inevitable, but *Gabriel*



holds its own - it's not as politically charged or as literarily charged as that much-honored novel, but McNicholl's affable voice captures the wary innocence and budding sexuality of youth with polished originality.

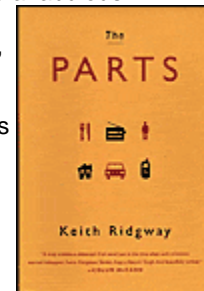
Author info, including an excerpt and two audio readings:

<http://www.soncalledgabriel.com/book/index.html>

An interview, mostly about Irish cooking: <http://www.gaylesbiantimes.com/?id=2781>

The Parts, by *Keith Ridgway* (St. Martin's Press, \$24.95)

Six lives, each exhilaratingly weird in its own way, intersect in this dazzling, daunting, and frequently hilarious novel. Delly, heiress to a fabulous pharmaceutical fortune, is dying in her mansion on the outskirts of Dublin. Kitty, a grandly obese lesbian author, lives in the attic and cares for Delly. Dr. George, Delly's adopted son (or is he?) is keeping Delly alive - or slowly killing her. Joe hosts a popular Dublin radio show, but his life is a mess. Barry is a horny homosexual who produces Joe's program. And Kez - a handsome teenage rent boy who dearly loves his Mum - crosses paths with all of them. Barry lusts after Kez and books him on Joe's show. Dr. George kidnaps Kez for medical experimentation. Kitty stumbles across the underground chamber where Kez has been stashed. And when Kez wanders dazed and bloody into Delly's bedroom, she finds a reason to live. *The Parts*, with its crowded cast of vivid characters and its intricate cascade of comic catastrophes, is a genuine delight.



Ridgway's first novel, **The Long Falling** (Mariner, \$13), published in 1998, was a stellar debut promising even better work to come - and *The Parts* is that work, well worth a six-year wait. *The Long Falling* is about Grace Quinn, an abused wife shunned by neighbors in her small rural village after her drunken husband kills a young woman in a car accident; after he's killed in hit-and-run revenge, Grace moves to Dublin to live with her estranged gay son Martin, who left home years earlier to escape his father's relentless abuse. As in *The Parts*, Ridgway weaves his gay characters and their concerns into a larger story - one that's poetic, sad, and ultimately spiritually shattering. Unlike *The Parts*, *The Long Falling* is dark and often stark - an apt encapsulation of Grace Quinn's emotional arc. Ridgway has two other books - *Horses* (Faber & Faber, 1997, reissued 2003), more a novella at just 80 pages; and a short story collection, *Standard Time* (Faber & Faber, 2001). Neither is available in the U.S., but there is ordering information on the author's web site - as well as an image of the cover of the British edition of *The Parts*, which evokes the wit of the book far better than the dull dull dull American cover.

Author info: <http://www.keithridgway.com/index.htm>

The fourth Irish read of last month was **Kilbrack** (Scribner, \$14, 1990), written about a decade before O'Neill's *At Swim, Two Boys*, but not available

in an American edition until this year (it's the first novel he wrote, though the second he published). It's a rollicking read - *The Irish Times* called it "a



bagatelle of bucklepping fun," and though I can't find bucklepping in my dictionary, it sure sounds rowdy. Unlike O'Neill's moody first novel (see below) or his serious third, *Kilbrack* is a comic fable about an amnesiac with the quintessentially Irish name of O'Leary Montague - assigned by a nurse when he awakens, at age 25, after a hit-and-run accident (see Ridgway's *The Long Falling* - there must be something about those narrow, twisting country roads...). With no memory of his own life, he latches onto the eccentric characters whose lives he discovers in an unpublished memoir, and eventually heads for the very rural village of *Kilbrack* to

meet them all - an unforgettable encounter with Irish rural life that both satirizes and pays homage to Irish popular novels. There's not much queer in the book - a few uncomfortable slurs from O'Leary's homophobic father. But this early work is definitely bucklepping great fun.

A 1990 review: <http://www.iol.ie/~atswim/kilbrack/litrev.html>

And an excerpt: <http://www.iol.ie/~atswim/kilbrack/chap5.html>

And, for O'Neill completists, here's some information on his very first published novel, **Disturbance** (1989), available in the UK from Scribner, but not yet in the U.S.: "Nilus Moore, a young Irish boy, lives with his father in their decaying, shambolic house. Haunted by the death of his mother, he escapes the chaos outside in the refuge of his bedroom, where he obsessively makes and remakes a matte-black jigsaw and checks the perfect folds of his sheets. His garlic-chewing father has taken to his bed with a bottle of brandy, oblivious of his brother's plans to demolish his already-crumbling home - now filling up with a bizarre collection of paying guests. As the rest of the household seems to tumble down around him, the atmosphere grows ever more alarming and Nilus has to struggle to keep his house - and his mind - from falling apart."

An excerpt: <http://www.iol.ie/~atswim/disturb/chap1.html>

And some history from the author:

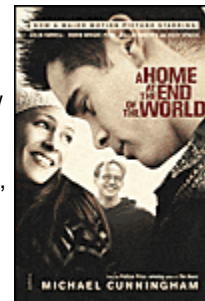
<http://www.iol.ie/~atswim/disturb/notes.html>



[back to top](#)

X-Rated Books Massaged into PG Flicks

Colin Farrell's cock has been cut from the film version of Michael Cunningham's novel *A Home at the End of the World* - apparently its presence in a scene where he, and it, swung out of bed was too "distracting" for preview audiences. The film has been popping up at gay film festivals recently - snipped - and goes into general release at the end of this month - a good reason to read, or re-read, the book.



Elsewhere, the producer of the Ang Lee-directed film based on Annie Proulx's stunning short story, "Brokeback Mountain," says that stars Heath Ledger and Jake Gyllenhaal won't be nearly as sexual as their characters were in the story: "Clearly, it's pretty challenging material, but Ang said two men herding sheep was far more sexual than two men having sex on screen."

So much for the 2005 movie's early hype as the flick that "shatters Hollywood's gay-sex taboo." That was the hope of Chris Packard, author of the September, 2004 book **Queer Cowboys: Desire in 19th Century Westerns** (Palgrave Macmillan, \$18.95). The story "makes plain what's implicit in the cowboy stereotype, in terms of an alley-cat, roaming sexuality that is always alive," the adjunct professor at New York University's Gallatin

School said. "Cowboys are such central figures in pop culture and such idealizations of mainstream macho masculinity that we should start to include the homoerotic aspect of that masculinity." Obviously, that alley-cat sexuality is too hot for the snuggle scenes...

... but early drafts of the script were hotter:

<http://archive.salon.com/ent/movies/feature/2004/01/14/brokeback/index.html> (To access, use the "day-pass" and watch a brief ad)

And there is one film based on gay fiction that hasn't been de-sexed for the silver screen - *Sugar*, released in June in Canada after making the gay film fest rounds. It's based on a series of short stories culled from Bruce LaBruce's legendary 'zine *JD's* - a lot harder to find to read than either Cunningham's novel or Proulx's short story, alas. But if the link is working (it wasn't in late June) you might be able to download some of the 'zine at LaBruce's site: <http://www.brucelabruce.com>. You can certainly read his nascent blog...

As for the film: Toronto's *Xtra Magazine* says it teases something shocking out of the stories - sweetness:

<http://www.xtra.ca/site/toronto2/arch/body1711.shtm>

In *The Globe & Mail*, straight but smart freelance writer Jennie Punter, who cares about small movies, found much to like:

<http://www.theglobeandmail.com/servlet/ArticleNews/TPStory/LAC/20040625/KLINCK25/TPEntertainment/Film>

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[back to top](#)

36 for 2004-2005: The Alyson Books Catalog

Several intriguing memoirs, a long-awaited sequel, the fabulous *Cockettes*, many mysteries, and porn aplenty: here are Alyson's 2004 **Books To Watch Out For**.

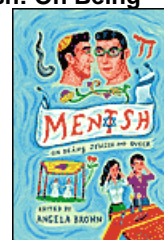
For July: **Saving Valencia**, by Steven Cooper, a story of kidnapping, ransom, family ties, rich heiresses, and a magic penis, is a giddy sequel to the giddy **With You in Spirit**.

Clay's Way, by Blair Mastbaum, is fiction by a 24-year-old former model writing electrically about a 15-year-old wannabe punk rocker and haiku writer in Hawaii obsessed with an outwardly cool but equally adrift 17-year-old surfer. **You Can't Say That: Common Sense From America's Number 1 Gay Radio Talk-Show Host**, by Charles Karel Bouley of KGO in San Francisco, collects essays bound to infuriate the left as well as the right.

Box Lunch: The Layperson's Guide to Cunnilingus, by Diana Gage, is, one hopes, as clever as its title. **Hard Men**, by Patrick Califia, collects his bad-to-the-bone erotic fiction.



For August: **101 Gay Sex Secrets Revealed**, by Jonathan Bass, leaves unanswered the mystery of the one hundred and second secret. **Claire of the Moon**, by Nicole Conn, is a new edition of an old Naiad Press title. **Love Letters in the Sand**, by Sharon Stone, is not by an actress, though it is about a twice-married woman whose libido is inflamed by a Grammy-winning rock star with a stalled career. **Mentsh: On Being Jewish and Queer**, edited by Angela Brown, includes stories by Simon Sheppard, Aaron Hamburger, Bruce Shenitz, Steven Cooper, David May, and two dozen others. **Queer Theory, Gender Theory: An Instant Primer**, by Riki Wilchins, is a brisk trip through the byways of bodies, sex, and desire.



For September: **Firelands**, by Michael Jensen takes the young "Johnny Appleseed" of the 1999 novel in Chapman, to the fierce winter of 1799, where Wendigo

FIRELANDS

killings terrorize the settlement of Hugh's Lick, and frontiersman Cole has feelings for the Delaware brave Pakim, who saved his life. **Not the Only One: Lesbian and Gay Fiction for Teens**, edited by Jane Summer, is a revised edition with new tales by Gregory Maguire, Michael Thomas Ford, and Brent Hartinger. **Lucky Stiff**, by Elizabeth Sims, is the third Lillian Byrd crime story, with Lillian reconnecting with her summer camp best friend Duane to unravel a gruesome mystery affecting both families. **In Deep and Other Stories**, by Simon Sheppard, is a new short story collection from a primo wielder of the porno pen.

For October: A Serious Person, by Orland Outland, is all about becoming an American Queer Idol for songwriter Adam Holt; a novel that won't have readers singing the blues. **Blue Days, Black Nights**, by Ron Nyswaner, is the **Philadelphia** screenwriter's memoir about life's fearless highs and harrowing lows, and about losing oneself in reckless passion. **Murder in the Rue St. Ann**, by Greg Herren, brings back sexy private eye Chans MacLeod (**Murder in the Rue Dauphine**), investigating shenanigans around the opening of a French Quarter club. **Death by Discount**, by Mary Vermillion, introduces lesbian sleuth Mary Gilgannon and her sidekick Vince, investigating a murder that may be due to Wal-Mart's encroachment. **Lust: Bisexual Erotica**, by Marilyn Jaye Lewis, is women's porn with a bisexual kink.



For November: Mondo Homo: Your Essential Guide to Queer Pop Culture, by Richard Andreoli, is a sort of queer eye for the queer guy collection, with tips on what not to do, say, or wear at the gym, why TV bitches matter, and how to do things we shouldn't do, with gusto, like listening to Eminem. **Alexander the Great: The Man Who Brought the World to Its Knees**, by Michael Alvear and Vicky A. Schecter: With a title like that, is this bio - "revealing a diva who could throw hissy fits that would take Liza's breath away" - to be taken seriously? Sort of; it does have facts as well as "fags hags hanging off him like laundry." **Bear Lust: Hot, Heavy, Hairy Fiction**, edited by Ron Suresha, includes lusty tales of Roman warriors, a Norse god, and some cowboys one presumes are hairy. **The Eleventh Hour**, by Lauren Maddison, is the fifth Connor Hawthorne mystery about an amateur dabbler in the spiritual world (lesbian characters, but good guy reading).

For December: Midnight at the Palace: My Life As a Fabulous Cockette, by Pam Tent, tells all about the gender-bending glory of a legendary troupe of counterculture radicals, fag and otherwise. **Dyke Drama: The Complete Guide to Getting Out Alive**, by Terry Fabris and Angela Brown, is a handy book for boys to read, with its many tips on dating drama, drunk drama, workplace drama, therapy drama, and dyke incest - dating your ex's ex's ex. **Ultimate Lesbian Erotica 2005**, edited by Nicole Foster, and **Ultimate Gay Erotica 2005**, edited by Jesse Grant, are two copycat entries in the crowded best-of-porn anthology market started a decade ago by Cleis Press's **Best Gay Erotica** and **Best Lesbian Erotica** series. Hmm. Is **Ultimate** bigger, harder, and longer than **Best**? Does **Unsurpassed!** come next?

And For 2005: The Blood of Kings, by John Michael Curtovich, is about murdered hunks, Egyptological weirdness, centuries of bloodlines (January). **Best Gay Love Stories 2005**, edited by Nick Street, and **Best Lesbian Love Stories 2005**, edited by Angela Brown, are two original collections of romance gone right (January). **Dinah! Three Decades of Sex, Golf, and Rock 'n' Roll**, by Michelle Kort, explicates the sporty dyke's alternative to the Michigan Womyn's Music Festival (February). **Mardi Gras Murders**, by Phillip Scott, brings back the unlikely likeable duo of Marc and Paul, investigating more bizarre murders Down Under (February). **Tweakers: How Crystal Meth is Ravaging Gay America**, by Frank Sanello, connects the dots between crystal use and HIV (March). **S/He**, by Minnie Bruce Pratt, brings back a brave memoir of overcoming a repressive Southern upbringing (March). **One Teacher in 10**, edited by Kevin Jennings, is a new edition of an Alyson classic about struggles and victories in the classroom (March). **How to Get Laid: The Gay Man's Essential Guide to Hot Sex**, by Parker

Ray, offers tips on using friends to get laid, making other guys look bad, and sleeping-around etiquette - and some less bitchy suggestions, too (March).

Whenever: **Center Square: The Paul Lynde Story**, by Steve Wilson and Joe Florenski, two fans who met over Florenski's web site devoted to the "bizarre, prickly, hilarious persona," collaborated on a magazine article, and pumped it up into a bio... that has been postponed from its original September publication date.



[back to top](#)

Info from the Internet

Chad Graham of *The Advocate* discusses almost no gay books in his witty lament about the lack of good gay summer reading:

http://www.advocate.com/html/stories/918/918_clinton.asp

Brattleboro homeboy Philip Galanes is interviewed by the local paper about his fiction debut, *Father's Day*:

<http://www.reformer.com/Stories/0,1413,102~8862~2225539,00.html>

David Leavitt tells why a woman is the gay character of his first novel in four years, *The Body of Jonah Boyd*:

<http://www.windycitymediagroup.com/gay/lesbian/news/ARTICLE.php?AID=5300>

Grab Bag: Twisted Canadian writer Derek McCormack's omnibus collection of truly weird tales, narrated by a lonely gay teen, is a real treat, says the Village Voice:

<http://www.villagevoice.com/issues/0425/morales.php>

The New Statesman remembers Michel Foucault, 20 years after his death:

http://www.newstatesman.com/site.php3?newTemplate=NSArticle_Ideas&newDisplayURN=200406280015

An interview with the co-editor of *Queer Crips*:

<http://www.washblade.com/2004/6-25/arts/feature/fighting.cfm>

British author Mark Simpson – he who coined the word "metrosexual" – celebrates the life of musician Morrissey in a new biography:

http://www.advocate.com/html/stories/918/918_morrissey.asp

Michael Thomas Ford, with two bestsellers on the lists this month, wrote a condensed history of gay pride for the *SF Chronicle*:

<http://www.sfgate.com/cgi-bin/article.cgi?f=/chronicle/a/2004/06/13/PKG1572U481.DTL>

And Ford discusses the genesis of one of those books, *Ultimate Gay Sex*:

<http://www.newyorkblade.com/2004/6-4/arts/main/gaysex.cfm>

The Publishing Triangle's just-announced "100 best lesbian and gay nonfiction books" spans *The Naked Civil Servant* to *The Leatherman's Handbook*; scan the full list here:

<http://www.publishingtriangle.org/100nonficbest.asp>



[back to top](#)

Bestsellers from Our Stores: Atlanta's Outwrite Bookstore & Coffeehouse

GAY MEN'S TITLES/June, 2004

1. *Ultimate Gay Sex*, how-to by Michael Thomas Ford, DK Publishing, \$30
2. *I'm on My Way*, gay fiction by Christopher David, Author House, \$13.95
3. *Last Summer*, gay fiction by Michael Thomas Ford, Kensington, \$24.95
4. *At Ease: Navy Men of World War II*, photos collected by Evan Bachner, Abrams, \$35
5. *Always Have, Always Will (Queer as Folk 3)*, TV series fiction by Quinn Brockton, Pocket Books, \$12.95
6. *Shameless*, gay fiction by Paul Burston, Warner Books, \$13.95
7. *Trust Fund Boys*, gay fiction by Rob Byrnes, Kensington, \$23.95
8. *The Trouble Boy*, gay fiction by Tom Dolby, Kensington, \$23.95
9. *Keeping Mr. Right: The Gay Man's Guide to Lasting Relationships*, self-

help by Kenneth George, Alyson, \$14.95

10. *On the Couch: Volume 2*, photos by Tom Bianchi, Bruno Gmunder, \$40

GENERAL INTEREST TITLES/June, 2004

1. *What the Bible Really Says About Homosexuality*, religion by Daniel A. Helminiak, Alamo Square Press, \$13
2. *On the Down Low: A Journey Into the Lives of "Straight" Black Men Who Sleep with Men*, cautionary memoir by James L. King, Broadway Books, \$21.95
3. *Wicked: The Life and Times of the Wicked Witch of the West*, gay-interest fiction by Gregory Maguire, ReganBooks, \$14.95
4. *Strength for the Journey: Biblical Wisdom for Daily Living*, religion by Peter J. Gomes, HarperSanFrancisco, \$14.95
5. *The Da Vinci Code*, general fiction by Dan Brown, Doubleday, \$24.95
6. *The Metrosexual Guide to Style: A Handbook for the Modern Man*, how-to by Michael Flocker, Da Capo Press, \$12.95
7. *Bleachy-Haired Honky Bitch: Tales from a Bad Neighborhood*, comic memoir by Hollis Gillespie, ReganBooks, \$22.95
8. *The Five People You Meet in Heaven*, inspirational prose by Mitch Albom, Hyperion Books, \$19.95
9. *The Birth of Venus*, general fiction by Sarah Dunant, Random House, \$22.95
10. *Now Is the Time to Open Your Heart*, memoirish fiction by Alice Walker, Random House, \$24.95

Outwrite site: www.outwritebooks.com



[back to top](#)

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