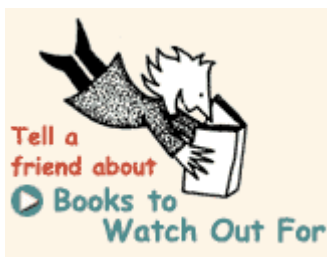




In this issue...

- [Donald Allen, a man of range and taste](#)
- [Reclaiming Joe Brainard, beating off to the Beats](#)
- [Coming of age, coming out, cumming](#)
- [Four favorites of the past three months](#)
- [Bloom & Chroma: Two cool queer journals](#)
- [Gaytoday.com: R.I.P.](#)
- [Chip Kidd's new novel previewed](#)
- [10 Books, nothing in common, To Watch Out For](#)
- [Steve Saylor cherishes a review, and other literary news](#)
- [Linking Up: Authors on the Internet](#)
- [Bestsellers from our bookstores: Norfolk, VA](#)
- [My lazy, hazy, crazy, summer daze](#)

- [Printer-friendly version](#)



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

Volume 1 Number 9

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A new novel of terror, legend and gay romance set against the harsh backdrop of the American frontier. The sequel to the national best-seller *Frontiers*.

By [Richard Labonte](#)

What the Obits of Donald M. Allen Forgot to Say

Donald M. Allen, who died in San Francisco late in August at age 92, was most prominently remembered in national obituaries as an early editor at Grove Press - where he worked on John Rechy's *City of Night* - for the landmark poetry anthology *The New American Poetry 1945-1960* which introduced writers from the Beat Generation and the New York and Black Mountain schools, and for his work with Jack Kerouac, Allen Ginsberg, Richard Brautigan, and *The Evergreen Review*. Mention was also made of the Four Seasons Foundation, whose books featured the letters and poetry of such writers as Michael McClure, Gary Snyder, Lew Welch, and Philip Whalen, as well as gay poet Aaron Shurin.

Within the queer literary community, however, he deserves to be remembered for Grey Fox Press, which for more than 20 years - from the early seventies to 1997 - published a number of seminal gay books. Among them: Eric Rofes' early study of gay teens and suicide, *I Thought People Like That Killed Themselves*; *Gays Under the Cuban Revolution*, by Allen Young; Margaret Cruikshank's *New Lesbian Writing* and *The Lesbian Path* (both used as readers for many 1980s gay-studies college classes); Roy Woods' collection of working-class gay fiction, *Restless Rednecks* (a book begging to be reprinted); fiction by Richard Hall, Daniel Curzon, and Guy Davenport; poetry by Ginsberg, Kerouac, Jack Spicer, Robert Duncan, and Frank O'Hara; *Chapters From an Autobiography* by Samuel Steward, touching on his sexual encounter with Thornton Wilder and his friendship with Alice B. Toklas and Gertrude Stein; and - under the Perineum Press imprint - several of Steward's "Phil Andros" collections of erotic fiction, bestowing deserved literary luster on such classics as *Boys in Blue*, *Below the Belt*, *Different Strokes*, and *Roman Conquests*.

From Richard Hall's limpid, luminous short stories to Phil Andros' hot and horny sexual encounters, from the Zen-like poetry of Gary Snyder to the intense letters of Lew Welch, from Guy Davenport's riffs on the classics to Richard Brautigan's ballsy brawling - Donald Allen had range.

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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Perth, ON K7H 2J3
Canada.

Books for the **Lesbian Edition** should be sent to the San Francisco address.

He came into A Different Light in San Francisco almost every month, almost always dressed in the costume of a gentleman editor of a certain age - starched shirt, tightly-knotted tie, wool coat (do I recall leather patches on the elbows?); he would ask me about new titles and new authors, new poets and new publishers, and occasionally told me to get in touch if I heard of a writer he might be interested in publishing.

The last book from Grey Fox, as far as I know, was Michael Rumaker's 1997 semi-biographical, semi-autobiographical book *Robert Duncan in San Francisco*, a slim but absorbing and revealing account of Duncan's Bay Area years, linking the nascent gay rights movement, the free-spirited ethos of the Beats, and Duncan's transient role in San Francisco's poetry scene. As soon as it was published, Donald brought several copies for the new-book display table then at the front of the bookstore. He was proud of the book's look - Grey Fox titles were handsome creations - and as engaged with its prospects as he no doubt was when nurturing his first books as an editor, four decades earlier.

Grey Fox also published two earlier books by Rumaker, his exuberantly confessional stories *A Day and a Night at the Baths* (1979; the title says all; a sexy read) and *My First Satyrnalia* (1981; the early days of the radical faeries). I don't know how much of Donald Allen's list is still available - these two certainly aren't. But as poetic artifacts of pre-AIDS gay life, they ought to be.

So should another remarkable book from the early days of Grey Fox - *The Story of a Life: For the Consideration of the Medical Community*, by the pseudonymous Claude Hartland. The author was writing about his experiences as a closeted gay man as the 19th century turned into the 20th; his account of being attracted to men in uniforms while walking through a park at night is right out of the old *Drummer Magazine* (albeit G-rated).

This reader review by Mark Stickle from an online bookseller captures the spirit of the book beautifully:

"I accidentally came across this book at a gay studies workshop a few years ago. I had never heard of the author, and have yet to encounter anyone else who has read the book. It is an autobiography...the author grew up in Missouri in the late 1800s and writes of his coming of age as a gay man in a time and place where such a thing was literally unknown and even unimaginable. The writing is clear and direct. The story is simple and touching. I very much recommend this little book to anyone who is interested in learning more about our history as a people. It is not a book about neurosis or alienation. It is the life and words of a man who I would very much like to have known."

Those obits in the *New York Times* and the *Washington Post* honored Allen for his nurturing of the work of the Beats, of the Black Mountain poets, and of other writers who challenged the status quo of the literary arts. Relegating the second half of his publishing life to "also published seminal gay and lesbian works" is one of those written-out-of-history moments...

The *San Francisco Chronicle* obit recalls Donald Allen's decency:

[http://www.sfgate.com/cgi-bin/article.cgi?](http://www.sfgate.com/cgi-bin/article.cgi?file=/chronicle/archive/2004/09/05/BAGUG8K9711.DTL)

[file=/chronicle/archive/2004/09/05/BAGUG8K9711.DTL](http://www.sfgate.com/cgi-bin/article.cgi?file=/chronicle/archive/2004/09/05/BAGUG8K9711.DTL)

Literary colleagues - Robert Creeley, Richard Kostelanetz, Charles Upton, Peter Coyote - remember a friend:

<http://www.emptymirrorbooks.com/thirdpage/allentribute.html>

<http://www.emptymirrorbooks.com/thirdpage/don.html>

For a list of Grey Fox titles:

http://isbndb.com/d/publisher/grey_fox_press.html?start_item=21



[back to top](#)



More of the Beats and Remembering Joe: Two Books

Joe: A Memoir of Joe Brainard, by Ron Padgett.

Coffee House Press, 360 pages, \$17 paper.

Biographies written by best friends often deny hard truths. Not so poet Padgett's conversational remembrance of Joe Brainard, who, years before his 1994 AIDS death, retreated (artistically, though not personally) from the community of artists that energized New York's scene in the 1960s: twice gone but, thanks to this unflinching book, not forgotten. Padgett, comfortably straight, and Brainard, unconsciously gay, connected in their teens in conservative Tulsa's tiny hipster underground, then moved to Manhattan, subsisting by shoplifting food and selling their blood. Brainard eventually gained fame with his imaginative collages, comic drawing, and smart writing (most notably, *I Remember*), an eclectic artistic output that Padgett assesses with astute affection. In his early years, Brainard overused speed, ate poorly, and exulted in his promiscuity, a period Padgett recounts with pained frankness. Later on, he packed muscle onto a skinny physique, maintained a complex but affectionate relationship with writer Kenward Elmslie, and gradually stopped drawing and writing, a transformation Padgett explores with puzzled empathy. Brainard is one of too many gay artists whose early death erased him from queer history; this generous book restores his presence.

All about Brainard:

<http://www.joebrainard.org>

About *I Remember*:

http://www.granarybooks.com/books/i_remember/i_remember1.html

The Boke Press edition of *10 Imaginary Still Lives*, online:

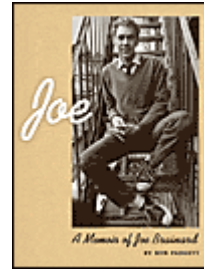
http://www.joebrainard.org/10_Imaginary_Still_Lives.htm

People of the World: RELAX:

<http://wings.buffalo.edu/epc/documents/obits/brainard>

About Ron Padgett:

<http://www.ronpadgett.com/>



Queer Beats: How the Beats Turned America on to Sex, edited by Regina Marler. Cleis Press, 209 pages, \$16.95 paper.



The "Beats" - constituting a scant couple of dozen writers, boyfriends, sex partners, wives, and hangers-on - have been autobiographed, biographed, anthologized, and otherwise critically analyzed near to exhaustion. For all that, *Queer Beats* adds something fresh and vital to the Beat canon. Marler, an acclaimed chronicler of England's Bloomsbury literary circle, has compiled a crazy quilt of queer sexual exuberance from the work of Beat daddies William Burroughs, Allen Ginsberg, and Jack Kerouac; colleagues Neal Cassady, John Giorno, Harold Norse, Diane de Prima, Brion Gysin, Herbert Huncke, and John Wieners; and even such bemused observers of the scene as Norman Mailer and Gore Vidal. The boy-loving poems of Ginsberg are obviously included; more interestingly, so is Vidal's hilarious account of his sexual encounter with Kerouac - though, elsewhere in these cleverly selected writings, the author of *On the Road* denies having sex with men. Young queer kids exploring their sexuality have long been drawn to these authors whose celebration of sexual fluidity shocked America in the 1950s and continues to entice today. How handy, and dandy, that this passionate primer has excerpted the juicy queer bits.

An interview with the author, by her publisher:

http://www.cleispress.com/Marler_spotlight.html

Marler interviewed on her book about the Bloomsbury circle:

<http://www.beatrice.com/interviews/marler/>

.....

[back to top](#)

Young, Smart, and Thinking About Cum

There's a new crop of angsty-adolescent novels every year - as I've said often, someone somewhere is always coming out. Here are seven of my

recent favorites; with the exception of David Levithan's novel-in-verse, these aren't young adult novels - their pitch is to adult readers, even if their protagonists are boys and young men.

***Fruit*, by Brian Francis**, MacAdam/Cage, 284 pages, \$23 hardcover.

Outwardly, young Peter Paddington seems relatively normal. He loves his ditzy and dysfunctional parents, grins and bears the selfish cruelty of his two older sisters, dutifully ensures that the newspapers he delivers land on his customers' front porches, and navigates the perils of junior-high cliques with aplomb. And - like every good stereotypical sissy - his best friends are straight girls, he occasionally dons dresses, and he's nuts about musicals. Inwardly, however, Peter is a jangled mess, medicating his emotions with chocolate bars and seeking security in assorted religions. *Fruit*, a sweet and tart novel, is about a somewhat tubby queer kid whose newly popped nipples keep teasing him (or so he imagines). He obviously has issues around body image - and when Scotch tape won't keep those nips from poking out and betraying his burgeoning sexuality, he resorts to masking tape. Ouch. This charming debut captures the perils of male puberty - out-of-control hormones, pits and pubes that sprout hair overnight, and an inexhaustible supply of boners - with humanity and hilarity. Francis is a Canadian, and this book was first published in his home and native land by ECW Press, home to several cool Canadian writers (RM Vaughan, Derek MacCormack, Sky Gilbert). Young Peter's 1980s-era is distinctively Canuckian, but translates well to a universal queer coming-out world. MSNBC's Fall Book Guide (who knew?) reviews new books by Alice Hoffman, Russell Banks - and Brian Francis:

<http://www.msnbc.msn.com/id/5069173/>



***Clay's Way*, by Blair Mastbaum**. Alyson Books, 246 pages, \$12.95 paper.



There will always be gay coming-out novels - after all, gays are always coming out (see above, eh?). But few have been as terrific as *Clay's Way*, a debut novel that sets the standards for any tales that follow. Sam is a 15-year-old wanna-be punk rocker and skaterboy, given to avoiding his banal parents, toking and drinking whenever he can, and channeling his dark moods into inept haiku scribbling. He's obsessively in love with 17-year-old Hawaiian surferboy Clay, whose cool surface and veneer of maturity - he has his own truck, dude - belie a tormented inner life. Clichéd characters? Not a bit. At 24,

the author - who turned his hand to writing after a six-year modeling career - isn't much older than the boys he writes about. Perhaps that's how he captures the anguish, paranoia, and fumbled passions of adolescence with such delicious authenticity. More likely, it's because Mastbaum is an uncommonly gifted writer whose economic prose style captures rage and longing, pleasure and pain, with sexy grace.

An interview (partial) with the author:

http://www.inmagla.com/2002/feature_archive/713c.cfm

Mastbaum's organic website:

<http://blairmastbaum.com/>

Here's Trebor Healey's enthusiastic review of Clay and his ways:

<http://www.gaytoday.com/reviews/091304re.asp>

An excerpt:

http://www.alyson.com/html/claysway/clays_excerpt.html

***How I Paid for College: A Novel of Sex, Theft, Friendship, and Musical Theater*, by Marc Acito**. Broadway Books, 240 pages, \$19.95 hardcover.

Pudgy thespian wanna-be Edward Zanni loves his best girlfriend but lusts after his high school's hunkiest football player. He's trapped in early-'80s suburban New Jersey hell with a disdainful father who won't pay for his Juilliard tuition and a spiteful stepmother who hates him - and without the adoration of his mother, who's away at a Peruvian commune. His only hope - after a near-nervous breakdown during his audition is interpreted as raw genius - is to win an acting scholarship. But he isn't eligible for any, so he embezzles money from his father to endow a new scholarship - in Frank Sinatra's name, specifically for Italian 17-year-olds from his hometown - by laundering the cash through a fictitious "Catholic Vigilance Society." Except that another kid wins it. The plot of humor columnist Acito's first novel is the very definition of silly, and the scholarship scheme doesn't even kick in until

halfway through. But there's hardly a page without a laugh, and sexually confused Edward is among gay fiction's most endearing recent coming-of-age characters. *How I Paid for College* is that most rare of pleasures: intelligent light reading.

The author interviewed:

<http://www.popmatters.com/books/interviews/acito-marc-040914.shtml>

Mark Acito's website, with links to his humor columns:

<http://www.marcacito.com/>

How Anne Cameron's *The Artist's Way* transformed Acito from unhappy opera queen to happy, funny writer:

<http://www.powells.com/taae/acito.html>

***Gutter Boys*, by Alvin Orloff.** Manic D Press, 223 pages, \$13.95



Shy, innocent lad loves tough, experienced hustler.

Tough hustler can't allow himself to love the shy lad.

That's the gist of this rollicking historical novel - if the early 1980s can be said to be history. Why not? It was an age before AIDS, let alone before - as the author points out in his deft scene-setting prologue - email, the Internet, VCRs for everyone, and Pac Man replacing pinball machines as pursuits of drugged-out dissolute youth.

Gutter Boy's gender-bending story is set in the steamy sexy netherworld of New York circa 1981, and set to the beat of that particular fusion of punk and dance music dubbed new wave. What could be precious and clichéd, though, is redeemed by *Gutter Boy's* insight about being 19 and gay and neurotic; Orloff, it seems, lived the life himself, and draws on his own past to craft coming-of-age fiction that flirts with the surreal - young Jeremy Rabinowitz chats with his two dead grandmothers, a fierce Jewish socialist and a haughty British matron - but is grounded, with a lashing of wit, in gritty emotional, sexual, and physical reality.

An interview with the author:

<http://www.alvinorloff.com/gutterboys.html>

***Child of My Right Hand*, by Eric Goodman.** Sourcebooks, 320 pages, \$14 paper.

What does this novel share with just about every coming-out story? A sensitive queer kid who is destined to star in his high school's annual musical, who evokes disdain from his peers, who falls nervously in love with another boy, and who is the victim of homophobic brutality. What sets this unsentimental mix of wry comedy and raw tragedy apart from the formulaic norm? Its lyrical exploration of a son's troubled self-discovery and of a family's intricate emotions, recounted primarily through the confused character of the queer lad's dad. Goodman's poignant portrait of a self-consciously liberal university professor - trapped by his intellectual mediocrity in a small Ohio town where bigotry bubbles beneath a veneer of tolerance - is the essential focus of *Child of My Right Hand*. But this refraction of gay turmoil through a straight prism - author and father both - doesn't diminish the vitality of the boy's coming of age; rather, it imparts an uncommon dimension and grace to a tale so common to the gay canon that it's too often a cliché - but not here.

***The Realm of Possibility*, by David Levithan.** Knopf, 224 pages, \$15.95 paper.

The nimble author of *The Realm of Possibility* is a grown man magically able to inhabit the spirits of a schoolyard full of teenage characters. Levithan's remarkable second young adult novel - after the entirely different but equally dazzling *Boy Meets Boy* - is the assured work of an emotional chameleon, a sexual changeling, and a physical shape-shifter. The book is presented as a novel-in-verse, but it reads like solid prose: insightful sentences and sentiments detail and define those risky, exuberant moments in the lives of teens when love happens and hearts break. Some of the kids exploring the realm of their possibilities are queer: Jed and Daniel, who "give each other meaning," and Megan, browsing a sex shop with her male friend to buy toys for her girlfriend. Some are straight: Pete bulking up with muscle to be strong for his girlfriend, and Anton, a boy who dresses in black, befriended by a black girl who sings the Gospels. These are just a few of the 20 captivating adolescents whose lives intertwine in this masterful mosaic.



Two excerpts:

<http://www.davidlevithan.com/>

Some abc's about David Levithan:

<http://www.randomhouse.com/features/davidlevithan/fromdl.html>

His home page:

<http://www.randomhouse.com/features/davidlevithan/index.html>

***The Trouble Boy*, by Tom Dolby.** Kensington Books, 272 pages, \$23 hardcover.



Jaded young professionals. Cocktail-swilling queens. Fashion fascists and back-stabbing celebrities. Easy drugs and cruel dish. Hollow Hollywood pretense and imploding Internet dreams. Preppy poseurs, Chelsea-boy bods, and decadent club kids, all desperate to get past the velvet ropes into VIP lounges: this is a book about a fellow slightly older than the boys populating the books above - but it's a portrait of some of those boys as young men. *The Trouble Boy*, oozing with such a staggering array of pop-cultural clichés, ought not be such delicious fun. But Dolby's debut novel - about being gay and 22, yearning for love but settling (for now) for sex, and striving for literary and monetary success in the shark pool of contemporary Manhattan - is both frothy and solid, a dandy fusion of hugely entertaining satire and seductively humane sentimentality. This novel is to real life as *Sex and the City* - to which it is opportunistically compared by the publisher - is to real sex, or even the real city. But its perceptive hyperbole and nuanced hysteria are rooted, quite adorably, in the sort of reality small-town queer boys might well dream about on their way to the bright lights of the big city.

The author's spiffy website:

<http://www.tomdolby.com>

The youngish author talks with an even younger interviewer:

http://outminds.com/outspoken/outspoken_column.cfm?cid=501



[back to top](#)

What I Liked During My Summer Interregnum

The best book of the month (October):

***Native Sons*, by Sol Stein and James Baldwin.** One World/Random House, 272 pages, \$24.95 hardcover.

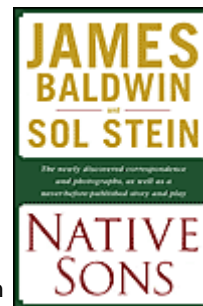
Native Sons is, first, a delicious morsel of a memoir, loquacious and loving, as Stein reflects on a friendship with James Baldwin that stretched from the 1930s to the author's death in 1987. Next, through annotated private correspondence, it narrates their professional relationship, as editor Stein, white and Jewish, helped Baldwin shape *Notes of a Native Son*, a classic work of black-self examination. This fascinating glimpse of the delicate balance between editor and author is followed by "Dark Runner," their never-before-published short story collaboration about a young black man's brush with the law in Paris, set in 1949 and drawn from Baldwin's own experience. And, finally, there is "Equal in Paris," a TV script based on the same story but never produced because the network that was interested - this was 1964 - wanted the hero recast as a white man. This is not a particularly deep or detailed book, but Stein's sheer joy in having known Baldwin, and his pure understanding of Baldwin's closing words in *Notes* - "This world is white no longer, and it will never be white again" - shine through.

The boxes that contained the letters that became the book:

<http://www.washingtonpost.com/wp-dyn/articles/A38208-2004Aug3.html>

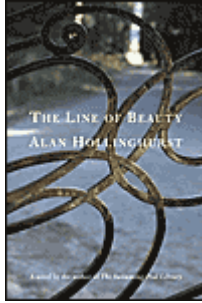
Some writers Stein has edited, on how Stein edits, including Baldwin:

<http://www.writepro.com/ssadvice.htm>



The best book of the month (September)

***The Line of Beauty*, by Andrew Hollinghurst.** Bloomsbury, 448 pages, \$24.95 hardcover.



Hollinghurst's fourth novel is exquisite on every level. As gay storytelling, it charts the four-year arc of 20-year-old Nick Guest's sexual coming of age - from virgin in love with his closest straight friend, to lover of a man dying of AIDS - with passion and compassion. As political commentary, it eviscerates the economic cruelty of the 1980s reign of British Prime Minister Margaret Thatcher, the Iron Maiden, with sharp insight and unambiguous loathing. As social satire, it eyeballs the born-to-the-manor insouciance of the wealthy and well connected (conservative both with their emotions and in their politics) with unsparing perception and elegant wit. The writing is poised and pitch-perfect, Proustian in its elegance and Jamesian in its eloquence; *The Line of Beauty* is tragic and comic, breezy and deep, so very queer and yet impeccably mainstream. It's as close to dazzling as a book can be. (Along with Colm Toibin's *The Master*, based on the life of Henry James, Hollinghurst's book was one of six finalists for Britain's prestigious Man Booker prize - prestigious, plus the winner gets about \$95,000.)

An excerpt:

<http://books.guardian.co.uk/bookerprize2004/story/0,14182,1310341,00.html>

About his three previous novels:

<http://www.contemporarywriters.com/authors/?p=auth48#bibliography>

Confidential Chats with Boys was Hollinghurst's 1982 short story collection (a seven-page broadsheet, it seems), six years before *The Swimming Pool Library*; a search of abebooks.com and alibris.com finds just one copy for sale, for \$725...

<http://www.cla.sc.edu/engl/LitCheck/hollinghurst.htm>

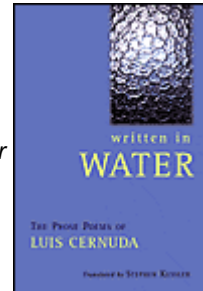
The best book of the month (August):

***Written in Water: The Prose Poems*, by Luis Cernuda.** City Lights, 158 pages, \$15.95 paper.

Though he was Federico Garcia Lorca's homosexual contemporary, Spanish poet Cernuda hasn't been honored - or romanticized - nearly as much. Lorca died young, assassinated by the fascists of Spain's civil war, while Cernuda went into lifelong exile in Europe and North America, dying in Mexico in 1963. *Written in Water* goes a long way toward relieving the restless poet's undeserved obscurity. His writing - lyrical, autobiographical, sensual, philosophical, and always guarded - traces his Seville boyhood, his passion for peace, his sad longing for a sense of place, and his radical (for its time) embrace of his sexuality. Few of the pieces are more than a page or two long; many ache with contradictions of an aristocratic intellectual fated to be a rootless wanderer. This slim book, translated with delicate assurance by Stephen Keller, combines two different Spanish collections (*Ocnos* and *Variaciones sobre tema mexicano*) that the author had hoped to reissue as a single volume before his death. These evocative illuminations of an intensely internal life are worth the four-decade wait.

GLBTQ.com on Cernuda:

http://www.glbtq.com/literature/cernuda_1.html

**The most fun book of the month (August):**

***50 Reasons to Say "Goodbye"*, by Nick Alexander.** www.lulu.com, 151 pages, \$11.90 paper.

For a book brimming with vignettes about lust leading absolutely nowhere and sex gone sadly awry, *50 Reasons to Say "Goodbye"* is great fun to read. Hapless Mark, bouncing around England and the rest of Europe, risks blind dates, fritters away his nights in dark bars and stylish clubs, trolls the Internet until dawn, and bikes and hikes with men whose athleticism makes him feel inadequate. As he flees one man, he is ever hopeful that the next will be the perfect partner, the dream lover, the ideal man. Time and again, perfection is an illusion, dreams melt into nightmares, and ideals are dashed -

experiences recounted in self-contained chapters with lachrymose titles like "The Universe Lets Us Down" and "Drunk and Lonely." Alexander's self-published fiction is too intelligent to be written off as "gay chick-lit" - but it sure does share that genre's sassy way of hyperbolizing autobiography to tell an entertaining story. This obstinately optimistic first novel expresses both passion and pathos with firsthand freshness and a delightful balance of whimsy and wisdom.

An excerpt:

<http://www.nick-alexander.com/index1a.html>

Book website, more excerpts:

<http://www.50-reasons.com/>

Alexander also produces a politics/satire newsletter - a one-man's shallot equivalent to *The Onion*:

<http://www.bigfib.com/>

The most fun (though I didn't really like it) book of the month (September):

***You Can't Say That!* by Charles Karel Bouley.** Alyson Books, 251 pages, \$14.95 paper.

Radio talk-show host Charles Karel Bouley is arrogant and abrasive, bombastic and banal, contentious and contrary, defiant and defensive, egotistical and... well, what do you expect? Those qualities aren't inappropriate on his day job; braying is effective over the air. It does wear thin, though, in this uneven collection of commentaries and essays drawn mostly from Bouley's Advocate.com column. So does the repetition - there are dozens of variations on the boastful phrase "being the first openly gay couple to host a major-market drive-time radio show." An editor, please? That said, *You Can't Say That!* has some fine sections, particularly when Bouley writes passionately and beautifully about his 12 years with, and the death of, his husband Andrew, with whom he co-hosted a talk show on KFI in Los Angeles. And, agree or disagree, he expresses his convictions - among them, that PFLAG is a pointless, feel-good organization, that bisexuality is a cop-out, and that monogamy is a must - with ferocious sincerity. Fiercely opinionated is too tame a description for this brash, brawling book.

Part website, part blog. In his Oct. 3 entry - and these entries are long, personal, intense, and opinionated - Bouley bitch-slaps his publisher:

<http://homepage.mac.com/karel/iblog/B1661239496/>

The most fun book of the month (October):

***Kyle's Bed & Breakfast*, by Greg Fox.** Kensington Books, 144 pages, \$13 paper.



Everyone who checks in to Kyle's welcoming B&B, set in a fictional tourist town on the north shore of Long Island, has drama-queen issues. Proprietor Kyle, steadfast and romantic, longs for Mr. Right. Queeny best friend Richard has an acid tongue and a libido in overdrive. Cocky Eduardo is a tough queer Latino kid tossed into the street by his parents. Drop-dead gorgeous Brad is a deeply closeted minor-league baseball hero. And straight-acting Nick is a brooding firefighter whose life is shadowed by the attacks of 9/11. These are a few of the flawed but empathic characters who pass through *Kyle's Bed & Breakfast*, a comic-strip collection with the heft of a comic novel. Fox ably tackles serious topics: gay fatherhood, fear of AIDS, love and commitment, and locker-room homophobia. But this engaging compilation of the strip's first five years (1998 to 2003) is at heart a witty soap opera where sexual couplings abound, everyone has muscles for days - and a scintilla of soul - and the plot twists and character kinks are delightfully intricate.

The author's website, chock-full of past episodes, new strips, info on the central cast of characters, and much more:

<http://members.aol.com/kylecomics/page2.html>



[back to top](#)

The Bloom of Fall, Tormented Chroma: Two Mags

The second issue of *Bloom: Queer Fiction, Art, Poetry & More*, Summer 2004, arrives just in time, days before the end of summer (and more on time than this edition of *Books to Watch Out For*, anyway) with a stellar lineup of contributors assembled by Charles Flowers: John Weir's short story "How to Disappear Completely" opens the issue – a never-self-indulgent riff on the loneliness of being gay. Michelle Cliff's "Crocopolis," a sensuous account of lust between "the Egyptian woman" and the female narrator, is the last story in the issue. Poetry follows - Ron Moring, Gretchen Primack, Stacey Waite, Tiffany Lynn Wong, Dean Kostos, and Gail Hanlon are six of the 25 poets whose work is featured here. In his 17-page essay, Clifford Chase pronounces dozens of splendid factoids about life after losing a tooth, such as: "Whenever I get on the subway, I glance around for someone cute to glance at, and if there isn't anyone, I resign myself to boredom." And, "In exchange for the tooth, at least I had been granted the vivid experience of losing it." And, "I don't look my age, but I've lost my looks anyway." Jaded, but smart about it. Christopher Hennessey interviews D.A. Powell on visceral, sexual, disturbing, formal poetry. There is art: Roxa Smith reinterprets Renaissance portraits, Tim Doud's "Angie" portraits celebrate lipstick choices. Other fiction: E.J. Levy, Mary Beth Caschetta, John Rowell. Other poetry: Reginald Harris, David Groff, Timothy Liu, Carl Phillips, Marilyn Hacker, Cheryl B., Letta Neely, Angelique Chambers, and more you will read when you buy this splendid queer journal, in size like, oh, *Reader's Digest*, but much much more relevant to our lives, four issues a year/\$10 an issue: www.bloommagazine.org.

Except for "Lawrence Schimel," most Americans, except the best-read of internationalists, won't know many of the bios in the back of *Chroma: A Queer Literary Journal*, Summer 2004, first issue, edited by Shaun Levin. And Lawrence's contribution, really, is to translate beautifully the Leopoldo Alas short story "Lovers' Holiday," about the indolence of displaced desire. Other fiction: Keith Munro's "Jolt," about desire in the aftermath of tragedy; and John Joseph Bibby's "Story of My Life," about Ashton Kutcher being punk'd about sex and Heath Ledger getting a blowjob and Rufus Wainwright wiping blood off the narrator's nose, but not really; and Bunny Bauer's "The Bunny Chronicles," about the journey towards becoming a writer; and Nina Rapi's "Foreigner," about how the only way for a girl to be is to be a man. There are poems by Cathy Bolton and Robert Hamberger. There is a yearning review by P. O'Loughlin on Robert Gluck's novel *Denny Smith* and a discerning review by Sue Brown on Louise Welch's *Tamburlane Must Die*. And – oddly, not on the table of contents – two pages of photos with text by Alison Henry about "beautiful and cool young girls who look like boys" and two pages of photos by Dylan Rosser of muscled men in close contact. As with *Bloom*, there is more; as with *Bloom*, there is a welcome important mix of boy voices and girl voices; as with *Bloom*, there is the spirit of an editor who values talented writers, as you will find when you read this splendid queer journal, subtitled *Tormented*, which is thematically appropriate, a journal sized like, oh, the *New Statesman* (do Americans read that one... you know, taller than *Newsweek*, just like British letter-size paper is taller than American letter-size paper) but much much more relevant to our lives, two issues a year/\$10 a year: www.queerwritersandpoets.co.uk.



[back to top](#)

Site of the Month, Deceased

As much as I enjoy reading books and writing about them, I also enjoy reading what other people who like to read books write about them; one of my weekly visits was to [gaytoday.com](http://www.gaytoday.com) - an eclectic free news and entertainment site edited by Jack Nichols and sponsored by the pay site [badpuppy.com](http://www.badpuppy.com). Here's the sad news: after eight years, [gaytoday.com](http://www.gaytoday.com) has closed; here's the news - <http://www.gaytoday.com/events/093004ev.asp>. Reading between the lines (but not yet confirmed) it seems that [badpuppy.com](http://www.badpuppy.com) is hurting from Paypal's ongoing purge of adult-content users from its online payment service...

Here are some samples of the literary pleasures from the gaytoday.com archive - which Nichols says will remain online indefinitely:

An interview with Joseph Hansen on his mystery oeuvre, his long gay life, and his new blog:

<http://www.gaytoday.com/interview/090104in.asp>

An interview with George Chauncey on his book *Why Marriage?*

<http://www.gaytoday.com/reviews/092704re.asp>

Jesse Monteguado's Book Nook book reviews ranged widely, and wisely; here he is on David K. Johnson's *The Lavender Scare*:

<http://gaytoday.com/reviews/032204re.asp>

...on David Leddick's *The Handsomest Man in the World*, which he liked way more than I did, but for the right reasons:

<http://gaytoday.com/reviews/090604re.asp...>

...and on "Hot Books for the Kinky Community"...

<http://gaytoday.com/reviews/042604re.asp>

As its editor, Nichols infused gaytoday.com with a liberation spirit and a freewheeling (and definitely anti-Bush) politic that the likes of gay.com and planetout.com, for all their good points, come nowhere near capturing. Here's a link to his editor's letter, welcoming readers to the first issue in February, 1997:

<http://gaytoday.com/garchive/viewpoint/020397vi.htm>

Nichols' sexual memoir *The Tomcat Chronicles* makes clear the roots of his activism; here is the Book Nook review:

<http://gaytoday.com/reviews/082304re.asp>

And, equally laudatory, here is my own:

***The Tomcat Chronicles: Erotic Adventures of a Gay Liberation Pioneer*, by Jack Nichols.** Harrington Park Press, 237 pages, \$19.95 paper.

"Gay Liberation" - that's what queer activism was called in the good old pre-Pride days. Nichols was there, well before Stonewall, when the Mattachine Society was still puttering along bravely, when "the movement" was a room full of warriors for gay equality, and when randy young men savored sex with carefree abandon. Tantalizing threads of that early liberation energy run through this rambunctious picaresque memoir of Nichols' life in the late '50s and early '60s. But *The Tomcat Chronicles* - a perfect title, promising erotica but not prurience - is primarily, and joyously, a celebration of sexual energy and erotic passion. Either Nichols jotted a daily journal way back when, or he has a photographic memory for the bodies of the boys he bedded. Whatever the case, his graceful prose effervesces with vivid accounts of everything from one-night tricks to three-month romances to - at book's end - his first encounter with Lige Clarke, the man who would be Nichols' partner for more than a decade, until his death in 1975. This is, I hope, just the first volume of a memoir, written gracefully, of a graceful life.



[back to top](#)

Chip Kidd's Second Novel, Previewed

Prolific book-jacket designer Chip Kidd's second novel (or, more accurately, novel-to-be) was the August-September Open Book serial on USA Today's online book pages; read it here:

http://www.usatoday.com/life/books/openbooks/2004-07-21-the-learners_x.htm.

The Learners, a sequel of sorts to Kidd's 2001 fiction debut *The Cheese Monkeys*, is set in the early 1960s, about a young graphic designer who decides to answer the first newspaper ad he creates. What follows is "a murder mystery about a killing that may never have taken place." Kidd's covers - more than 800 of them! - have helped sell books by David Sedaris and Augusten Burroughs. Look for the finished book in 2006.

Read an effervescent interview with Kidd about his cover designs here:

<http://www.identitytheory.com/people/birnbaum30.html>

And, part two, here:

<http://www.identitytheory.com/interviews/birnbaum136.html>

And there's even a book about him (he designed the cover):

<http://www.silverbulletcomicbooks.com/news/106499939166914.htm>

From a 2002 review of *The Cheese Monkeys*, online at The Agony Column Book Reviews and Commentary, by Rick Kleffel:

"The hard data on graphic design is extremely fascinating, and Kidd's trashing of untouched paragons of modern art is a hoot. He delights in confounding expectations of good, now-approved tastes. He's not above a vomit joke, but he's certainly up for a discussion of typefaces and fonts. It's an odd combination. The kind of crudity that seems mandatory in some novels is eschewed for a silly delight. The artistic banter is never stilted or pretentious. The Cheese Monkeys might be the perfect tonic for a reading palate jaded by the success of excess."

Here's the full review:

http://trashotron.com/agony/reviews/2002/kidd-the_cheese_monkeys.htm

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[back to top](#)

10 Books To Watch Out For

JUST OUT: *The Queer Movie Poster Book*, by Jenni Olson with a foreword by Bruce Vilanch (Chronicle Books) offers a visual history of gay film as depicted in coded promotional art. Olsen created Planet Out's rich film resource, Popcorn Q...



ALSO JUST OUT: *So Hard to Say*, by Alex Sanchez (*Rainbow Boys*, *Rainbow High*), a Simon and Schuster YA book about Frederick, who is more interested in Victor than in the 13-year-old girl who courts his kisses.

SPEAKING OF THOSE high school days, seriously: see *Fit to Teach: Same-Sex Desire, Gender and School Work in the Twentieth Century*, by Jackie M. Blount, a November State University of New York book that takes a historical look at the construction of gender in public school employment.

QUEER HISTORY, AGAIN in *Born to Be Gay: A History of Homosexuality*, by William Naphy - a global history from Trafalgar Square emphasizing that gay life was not all doom, gloom, and faggots burning at the stake prior to the 19th century.

FOR ARMCHAIR TRAVELERS: *The Third Sex: Kathoey, Thailand's Ladyboys*, by Richard Totman (Souvenir Press), gathers personal stories of Thailand's transvestites and examines transgender practices worldwide.

LIGHT BEFORE DAY, Christopher Rice's third novel, coming in February from Miramax Books, is about a 25-year-old journalist whose former lover has vanished and whose investigation uncovers a serial predator targeting young gay men in West Hollywood...

FELICE PICANO, whose several acclaimed memoirs have chronicled his sexual life from boyhood to middle age, now recalls the cat he befriended in Greenwich Village in the 1970s, in *Fred in Love* - also due in February, from Terrace Books...

MONEY TALKS IN *Business, Not Politics: The Making of the Gay Market*, by Katherine Sender (Columbia University, January) who makes the connection between marketing to gay consumers and the politics of gay rights and identities.

IN *Major Conflict: A Gay Life in the Don't-Ask-Don't-Tell Military*, a March memoir from Broadway Books, retired Major Jeffrey McGowan discusses his queer military years; he commanded troops in the first Gulf War with Iraq.

FEBRUARY HOUSE, by Sherill Tippins, is a February account from Houghton Mifflin of an experiment in communal living in Brooklyn during 1940 and 1941 that brought together such figures as Carson McCullers, W.H. Auden, Benjamin Britten, Jane and Paul Bowles, and Gypsy Rose Lee.



[back to top](#)

News About Writers and Writing

Scholastic Press editor David Levithan and young poet Billy Merrell are looking for writers ages 13 to 23, queer or not, for an anthology of personal nonfiction about today's queer teen experience. All royalties from the book, coming from Knopf in fall 2005, will go to GLSEN (the Gay, Lesbian, and Straight Education Network), a national organization ensuring safe schools for all LGBT students. "It used to be that queer teens were fighting to find a single voice. Now we each have our own voices – and finally someone wants to give us a place to tell our stories in order to show what gay/lesbian/bisexual/transgender/questioning life is really like now," say Levithan and Merrell in their call for submissions. The co-editors bring their own experience to *Queerthology*. Merrell - who will be 23 when the book comes out - is the author of *Talking in the Dark*, a collection of personal narrative poems that tell the story of a boy coming of age in contemporary America. Levithan's young adult novel, *Boy Meets Boy*, won the 2003 Lambda Literary Award in the Children's/YA category; his second novel is *The Realm of Possibility*. The deadline for submissions to *Queerthology* is Oct. 15; for information, go to www.queerthology.com.

Steven Saylor shares something every author loves - a great review. In an early-October email, he writes:
 "May I share some good news? I'm over the moon about the review of *The Judgement of Caesar* that recently appeared in the *Sunday Times of London*... the last sentence is the clincher: 'Saylor evokes the ancient world more convincingly than any other writer of his generation.' I have no idea if this is true...but seeing it in print certainly makes my day! (And) in other developments, *The Judgement of Caesar* has been short-listed for the Crime Writers Association Ellis Peters Historical Dagger Award (winner to be announced in London on Oct. 19)... a new collection of short stories, *A Gladiator Dies Only Once*, will be published next June... and right now I am very hard at work on *Roma: The Novel of Rome*, an epic saga (in the James Michener/Edward Rutherford vein) of the first thousand years of the Eternal City, from Romulus and Remus down to the death of Caesar."
www.stevensaylor.com

The full review (Aug. 15, by Joan Smith) isn't available online for free, so here's just a paragraph: "*The novels are billed as mysteries, although the description fits some of the earlier books more closely than this one. True, Gordianus has to solve a crime, and one that affects him personally: his estranged son Meto is accused of involvement in a plot to assassinate Caesar and faces execution if his father cannot clear him. But the real substance of the book is Saylor's confident re-creation of Alexandria at this crucial moment in both Egyptian and Roman history.*"

The Independent Publisher (IP) is an online resource that awards prizes annually in a kazillion categories; their 2004 winner in "Category 36-Gay/Lesbian" is a quite worthy book: *GLBTQ*: The Survival Guide for Queer & Questioning Teens*, by Kelly Huegel (Free Spirit Publishing). For more book info: http://www.freespirit.com/catalog/item_detail.cfm?item_id=114

The two runners-up were not bad books either: *Homosexuality & Civilization*, by Louis Crompton (Harvard University Press), and *Gay & Healthy in a Sick Society: The Minor Details*, by Robert N. Minor (Humanity Works!). For IP's comments on all three titles:

<http://www.independentpublisher.com/action.lasso?-Database=18news.fp3&-Layout=iparticle&-RecordID=39719&-Response=ipawrdetail.lasso&-Search>



[back to top](#)

Cruising the Net: Burroughs, Warren, Bright, and More

Powell's Books asks Queer It Boy Augusteen Burroughs a few really dumb questions:

<http://www.powells.com/ink/burroughs.html>

A two-part interview with Patricia Nell Warren, "a multi-faceted, mini-conglomerate enterprise of one":

<http://ec.gayalliance.org/articles/000444.shtml>

<http://ec.gayalliance.org/articles/000512.shtml>

Brandon Judell discusses a decade of *The Best American Erotica* - which includes plenty that is queer - with editor Susie Bright, for PlanetOut:

<http://www.planetout.com/entertainment/interview.html?sernum=360>

Andrew O'Hehir deconstructs the gay-themed classic *Death in Venice* for *Salon* (click through the Day Pass ad for a free read):

http://www.salon.com/books/review/2004/08/10/venice/index_np.html

Scott & Scott, the romantic Romantics - another interview!

http://www.bostonphoenix.com/boston/news_features/

[this_just_in/documents/04035321.asp](http://www.bostonphoenix.com/boston/news_features/this_just_in/documents/04035321.asp)



[back to top](#)

Bestsellers from Our Bookstores

Lambda Rising - Norfolk

October 2004

Top 10 Gay Fiction Titles

1. *Rainbow Boys*, by Alex Sanchez, Simon Pulse, \$7.99
2. *Bitch Slap: A Mark Manning Mystery*, by Michael Craft, St. Martin's Minotaur, \$24.95
3. *Geography Club*, by Brent Hartinger, HarperTempest, \$6.99
4. *Last Summer*, by Michael Thomas Ford, Kensington, \$14
5. *A Son Called Gabriel*, by Damian McNicholl, CDS Books, \$24.95
6. *Man About Town*, by Mark Merlis, Perennial, \$12.95
7. *Clay's Way*, by Blair Mastbaum, Alyson Books, \$12.95
8. *Latter Days*, by C. Jay Cox, Alyson Books, \$13.95
9. *Firelands*, by Michael Jensen, Alyson Books, \$14.95
10. *How I Paid for College: A Novel of Sex, Theft, Friendship & Musical Theater*, by Marc Acito, Broadway Books, \$19.95

Top 10 Nonfiction Titles

1. *Guess Who Came to Dinner?: Downlow Life-style of the Gay and Not So Gay*, by "Slick Rick" Dickson, Phil Dickson, \$14.95
2. *On the Down Low: A Journey Into the Lives of "Straight" Black Men Who Sleep with Men*, by James L. King, Broadway Books, \$21.95
3. *What Becomes of the Brokenhearted: A Memoir*, by E. Lynn Harris, Anchor Books, \$13.95
4. *Gay Dads: A Celebration of Fatherhood*, by David Strah, Kris Timken, and Susanna Margolis, Jeremy P. Tarcher, \$14.95
5. *Will & Grace: Fabulously Uncensored*, by Jim Colucci, Time Inc. Home Entertainment, \$19.95
6. *Box Lunch: The Layperson's Guide to Cunnilingus*, by Diana Cage, Alyson Books, \$13.95
7. *Ultimate Gay Sex*, by Michael Thomas Ford, DK Publishing, \$30
8. *The Trek to the Top of Mount Kilimanjaro: Africa's Highest Mountain*, by Ann Brand, Sea Level Books, \$9.95
9. *The Joy of Gay Sex*, by Charles Silverstein and Felice Picano, HarperResource, \$17.95
10. *The Funny Thing Is...*, by Ellen DeGeneres, Simon & Schuster, \$23

More bestsellers and staff faves at www.lambdarising.com



[back to top](#)

My Summer of Other Stuff

I do apologize for the discernable gap between this installment of **Books To Watch Out For: Gay Men's Edition**, and the last one. When you're a staff of one, and life interferes with the pleasure of putting this newsletter together, time flies. My partner's travels from San Francisco to Nashville to my home in Perth, Ontario, and some travails in transit, took some time away from queer reading and writing. So did a short-term contract to write about male teachers, lack of, for the Ontario College of Teachers, an obligation that, like Topsy, grew and grew and took me away from my computer and my stacks of books for many more weeks than anticipated. Look for the next issue in a couple of weeks (that would be, for the bibliographers among you, the September issue); and the next one a couple of weeks after – the real October issue. And then we'll be on to November, and all caught up.



[back to top](#)

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