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The Gay Men's Edition

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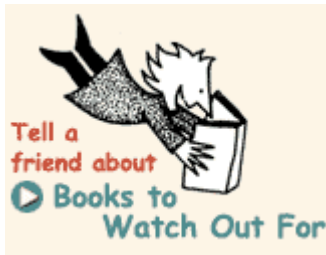
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Volume 2 Number 11



By Richard Labonte

GLB Publishers Fifteen Years On: An Interview

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

In the past couple of decades, a number of gay publishers have come and gone: Amethyst Press, Grey Fox Press, Knight's Press, Calamus Books, Masquerade/Bad Boy, Los Hombres, Other Countries, AttaGirl, most recently Gay Sunshine Press/Leyland Publications (hmmm: there's a history of gay presses waiting to be written!); in addition, Crossing Press stopped publishing queer books years ago, and St. Martin's Press phased out its Stonewall Inn Editions imprint more recently.

GLB Publishers is a survivor. Started by Bill Warner as something akin to a vanity press with standards, GLB ("gay/lesbian/bisexual") has evolved in 15 years into a well-run "co-operative publishing" home for offbeat and often accomplished gay and bisexual fiction and nonfiction (and a couple of lesbian titles, too). Along the way, Warner has pioneered gay e-publishing, making his titles available for download in up to eight different formats, and has even started to sell individual short stories for about a buck. He's happy about the past, and optimistic about the future:

"This year marks the fifteen-year anniversary for GLB Publishers -15 years of publishing with about four dozen authors, some of them new and yearning, some retired/retiring and experienced, and some in between," Warner wrote recently on his website. "I think they learned a lot about publishing (I know we did), because our authors participate alongside the editors and staff, becoming quasi-publishers themselves in the process... GLB authors participate in the design and appearance of their books if they want to. They also receive a much higher royalty (up to five times more than the mainstream). Books are becoming more expensive to produce but we try to keep current, to take advantage of technical advances, and also apply our expertise to current issues of importance to the community. Where is the world taking us... No one can predict the future with developments occurring

compiled by Richard Labonte.
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at the startling rate observed in the last few years, but we intend to keep up with it and maintain our leadership role in bringing the best possible g/l/b books to the community."

As part of BTWOF's continuing series of interviews with gay-interest editors and publishers, I recently exchanged emails with Bill; here's what he had to say about the past, present, and future of his press...



BTWOF: *You came to gay publishing 15 years ago, late in life and after other careers (you are also an MD) - what was the motivation?*

GLB: I used to travel great distances in my work and I frequently picked up gay novels to read on the planes. When I finished them I used to sigh, "I could have done better than that." When I finally had some free time, I decided to try out the author game and eventually published a bunch of novels and short stories under a variety of pseudonyms. Then when I decided to retire I thought of publishing the short stories in a collection, but no one was interested in doing it, so, again, why not do it myself? Desktop publishing was just coming into use. So I published three of my own books, and author friends saw what I was doing, and they asked me to do it for them, and that was the beginning of GLB Publishers. The New York publishers were not interested since the demand was relatively small.



One other element: Since I am bisexual, I wanted to write and publish bisexual erotica and no publishers would accept it. The third book I published was a bisexual-explicit novel (*Bi Ranchers Bi Mates*) that had been waiting for a publisher for a long time, and I resolved to publish other bisexual material whenever it seemed appropriate. I think we are the only publisher still that specifically looks for bisexual works.

BTWOF: *GLB is an unorthodox but efficient synthesis of publishing models – you charge authors up front to take on their work (in print format), but then provide full-service editing, design, and distribution, and higher royalties, than most other publishers. How did you devise this model, and has it evolved much over 15 years?*

GLB: I started out that way, with authors paying for the printing costs, but that was a little rich for most people, so the present arrangement, generally, is to charge something up front to make the author think a little – "Do I have enough confidence in my work to invest something in it" - and with this model the royalty has been decreased to 15% of list price. Of course that makes the model more dependent on the quality of the work and the likely sales potential.

BTWOF: *How many (print) books have you published since 1990? How many are still "in print" (as opposed to now available only as e-books?)*

GLB: About 60. Two went out of print after sales of about 5,000 copies (*Leather Rogues* by Bill Lee and *Secret Buddies* by Mike Newman) but last year we reprinted *Secret Buddies* with a new cover (and price).

BTWOF: *How selective are you about the books you publish - do you work with all comers, or are there books that you felt just wouldn't work for GLB that you turned down?*

GLB: These days I am turning many of them down. Over the years we have developed some philosophies about what we are interested in publishing and promoting, indirectly, and also more experience in sales potential. For instance, we published a book of poetry by Edward DeBonis (*Homonym*), a couple of years ago before all the recent hoopla, that has a strong message in favor of same-sex marriage; we published it mostly because we thought the issue should be discussed, and a book is one approach to that.

BTWOF: *And do you seek out authors, or let them find you?*

GLB: We make it relatively easy to find us and get info from our web site, but no, we don't go out hunting for authors and never did.

BTWOF: *As far as I know, GLB is the only gay publisher (besides West Beach Books, which makes its titles available as e-books through Amazon) to market electronic titles effectively, and the only one to sell its own titles from its own website. What prompted you to be an e-book pioneer?*

GLB: Just seemed like the logical thing to do when the Internet became so important. But perhaps the most important element was the widening of our audience that the Internet made possible. Think of the millions of gay/lesbian/bisexual people worldwide who have no access to a gay bookstore, whose bookstore would not stock a g/l/b book in English, and perhaps they are totally closeted because of social constrictions? At last we can make available to all these people all our books (as well as some that are never actually printed), as long as they have a credit card or can use some other means of payment. We also have insisted on making e-books available at roughly half the cost of the print book. We sell e-books daily to people in such places as Singapore, Madagascar, South Africa, of course the UK, Germany, France, Belgium, even Iran and Iraq.

We have also done some special web sites for authors and their books for some of the same reasons, as well as author bios on our web site.

BTWOF: *How many titles in your inventory are e-book only?*

GLB: I'm estimating, perhaps 30-40. That number is growing almost daily because of some of our special programs.

BTWOF: *Sales - what are your print bestsellers from over the years?*

GLB: *Secret Buddies* did very well. All of the Bill Lee books continue to sell well, but I'm not sure of the total numbers of each. The Dick Hardesty gay mystery series by Dorian Grey has sold well and we are now releasing the 10th book in that series (*The Paper Mirror*). The Chris Kent books about English schoolboys have all done very well over the years.

BTWOF: *What sales do you need to reach to turn a profit on a print book?*

GLB: I try not to think of it that way, but of course it is important that we make enough to pay for the next one. I get satisfaction out of putting out good books that have something to say about being gay or lesbian or bisexual, whether they bring in the bucks or not. The figure is probably about 3,000.

BTWOF: *Tell us how you came to be the publisher for prolific Dorian Grey's Dick Hardesty series, which now ranks with the series work of Michael Craft, Mark Richard Zubro, Richard Stevenson, and other gay-sleuth authors. What can you tell us about him - he has a high publishing profile but a low public presence. (The Paper Mirror, Grey's tenth in the series, is likely the last for GLB: see the "chat" excerpt below.)*

GLB: He sent me a manuscript out of the blue three or four years ago and I liked it and said okay, and then learned that there was another manuscript sitting on the shelf. And I had some ideas on gay mystery plots and of course he had many ideas, and so one book led to another. One of those ideas that appeared in *The Hired Man* was a first, I guess; the major clue to discovery of the murderer was the fact that he was bisexual. I think that is the first time that a character's bisexual orientation made an impact on mystery fiction.

Dorian has had some important health problems, which have curtailed some public exposure.

BTWOF: *What's ahead for 2006?*

GLB: We're getting interested in some comic topics and may add some of those to our list. I think g/l/b's have a slightly different sense of humor than straights and those books might never get published if left to the New York biggies.

(In a later email, Bill sent news of his first book in the humor vein: "As I mentioned, we are doing a bit of humor - our first attempt - this fall in the way of "self-help": *I Told You I Love You Now Get Out!*, by Chris Craig." If you can judge a book from its cover, this one looks like a queeny scream....)



Publisher info: www.glbpubs.com

Some covers: www.glbpubs.com/fictoc.html

GLB's extensive e-book catalogue, which includes delightfully horny short stories from Wayne of Down Under, for \$1 each:

www.glbpubs.com/welcomeebooks.html & www.glbpubs.com/ebooktoc.html

GLB's own half-price sale: www.half-pricedbooks.net

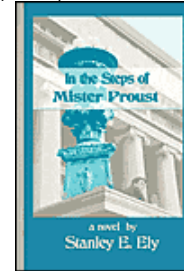


Reviewing GLB's Range

Bill Warner is an eclectic publisher (see partial catalog below): poetry, erotica, literary fiction, mysteries (the Dick Hardesty novels, which started out more as erotica with a murderous twist but which have evolved into more sedate whodunits), self-help books, and assorted memoirs. Here are a few of my favorites:

In the Steps of Mister Proust, by Stanley E. Ely, \$16.95 (2004)

It's a tale often told – innocent young kid comes to the big city, finds himself. The context here is college – Columbia University, where young Joshua, through the lens of the writing of Marcel Proust, thrills to sex, comes out, copes with the AIDS epidemic around him, weathers a family crisis, and grows up. Ely's novel can be didactic (the author is a lot farther along in life than his hero), but it captures the nervous thrill of self-acceptance quite nicely. Some other reviews: <http://www.glbpubs.com/proust.html>



A Time to Live, by Jim Brogan, \$13.95 (1997)

Jay Quinn's *Back Where He Started* garnered much well-deserved critical praise earlier this year as a novel that dealt gracefully with a gay man aging. Brogan's warm and sexy novel did the same thing almost a decade ago: it's the story of a middle-aged man on the other side of 50 who's a comfort to a gay man older than he is, while still engaging sexually and emotionally with men younger than himself.

An excerpt: <http://www.glbpubs.com/timeexc.html>

House of Broken Dreams, by Byrd Roberts, \$13.95 (2003)

Given that this hot-blooded blue blood family saga is set in Virginia, the author's name – it's gotta be a pseudonym! – is rather cheeky. Though he's published several books with GLB, this is the first I've read, and I was seduced. Roberts' soap-opera tale of Deep South old money, secret passion and stark betrayal is a charming guilty pleasure, spanning several decades in the life of Strut Widdicombe, whose life turns tumultuous when his banker father, found out as an embezzler, commits suicide, and Strut turns to work in a gay bar to save the family manse. Literary fiction? Not a bit. But Roberts' writing is strong and straightforward, and the unhappily-ever-after ending is a refreshing twist.

First chapter: <http://www.glbpubs.com/hbdchp1.html>

The Bunny Book, by John D'Hondt, \$13.95 (1991)

This was one of GLB's first books, and for a while – helped by the fact that D'Hondt lived in San Francisco – was a bestseller for several months at A Different Light on Castro Street. It wasn't the first "AIDS novel" by any means, but it was certainly the quirkiest. As far as I know, the author never wrote another novel – a Google search turns up a witty 1998 letter to *SF Weekly* about the San Francisco MUNI system's noisy new (back then) streetcars. But anyone wanting to sample something from GLB's varied backlist should start with this one. Here's what Robert Gluck had to say about it almost 15 years ago: "*This strange book could become a classic of literature that deals with AIDS, physical suffering, and loss. Cuteness and coziness represent a hopeless longing for safety and resolution. D'Hondt catches us off guard as his stories are re-contextualized by himself and his sick lover in an attempt to will safety into the world.*"

Bless the Thugz and Lil' Chil'rins, by Fredryk Traynor, \$16.95, (2004)

This one stands out distinctly on the GLB fiction list – it's not erotica, it's not a mystery (though there are many bodies), it's not a coming-out story. In fact, it's a genre all its own – gay gangsta fiction, infused with street slang and ghetto rhythms. Odd as it sounds, the heroes really are thugs – an older man and his younger lover, con artists, drug dealers, and bank robbers who finance their dream of launching a hip record label with ill-gotten gains. They also witness the sixteenth slaying of the notorious Romper Room Ripper, who for years has been kidnapping, torturing, and slaying teen boys. But they're black thugz, and going to the cops isn't really an option. Street justice ensues when the killer is found to be a prominent Christian televangelist. Traynor – there's nothing to be found about him as an author except for a



brief bio on the GLB website – has written a unique novel, right up the alley for fans of violent thrillers about savage killers.
The first chapter: <http://www.glbpubs.com/thugzchp1.html>

Familia Affair, by Rod Palmer, \$14.95, (2003)

From my Book Marks review for Q Syndicate: “*Handjobs and pissplay, ass-rimming and monster cocks, toned muscles slick with sweat and hard thighs coated with cum, even the turn-ons of identical twin hunks and heavy daddy-son incest: Familia Affair, set in a not-so-long-ago era when "Gay Pride" was more than a marketing slogan for vodka, is a hot read for most every taste. Palmer's one-handed erotic artifact also provides an amusing Sopranos-lite plot about mob families, gay activism, and falling deeply in love, threaded through page after page of sizzling raw sex - it's a fast and fun synthesis of accomplished anthropological porn and sweet, almost Puritan, romance.*”

The first chapter: <http://www.glbpubs.com/fachp1.html>

Guilty As Charged: The True Story of a Gay Beret, by Jay Hatheway, \$16.95 (2001)

Recent books by Jeffrey McGowan (*Major Conflict: One Gay Man's Life in the Don't-Ask-Don't-Tell Military*) and Rich Merritt (*Secrets of a Gay Marine Porn Star*) make it seem that the military-queer memoir is something new – there's even buzz about *Amazing Race 4* winner Reichen Lehmkuhl's *Here's What We'll Say*, about being gay in an air force academy, and it's not coming out until Fall 2006, from Carroll & Graf. Hatheway's potent and cogent memoir hearkens back to well before the ill conceived “don't ask, don't tell” policy of 1992, recounting his military trial after being outed in Germany. By now it's not news that queers are everywhere in the armed forces, and often tolerated by their peers – even more than 20 years ago. This memoir is a satisfying reminder that the battles being written about now were first fought a long time ago.

Other reviews: <http://www.glbpubs.com/guilty.html>

The first chapter: <http://www.glbpubs.com/guiltychp1.html>



The Gay History Writer's Project

In addition to publishing books, GLB has spun off several websites to showcase selected authors, and has launched a Gay History Writer's Project. Already up is a site devoted to the novels of John Coriolan, including his 2004 political novel *Dancing on the Barricades*; an e-book of his newer historical novel, *Of This World and the Other: A Novel of the Early 1800s*: “A conjecture about how a naturally-gay person might have come out - or not come out - in early 1800s Connecticut, Virginia, 'Regency' London, rebellious Paris, and bourgeois Dijon, and wound up as one more of the elegant queens on the famous Riviera getaway from Victorian middle class decency”; and five of his erotic fictions, from 1968's *A Sand Fortress* through *Christy Dancing, Unzipped, The Smile Of Eros*, and 1985's *Dream Stud and Other Stories*. The second site promotes the erotic work of Barton Lewis: five pulp novels from Greenleaf, including *Slave Brother Chicken, Glory Hole Cop, The Brig Boys, Hollywood Marine*, and *Dirt Road Chicken* (“Teenager Chuck runs away from home in upstate New York, hitchhiking to California, and learns quickly the good and the not so good points of being well endowed and willing to use it.”)

“We were never a self-conscious Violet Quill group,” says Coriolan about his friendships more than four decades ago with Gordon Merrick, Richard Amory, Carl Flinders, and Marco Vassi. The full mini-memoir:

<http://www.johncoriolan.com/sum.html>

“I understand that many of the contributing writers to the Greenleaf stable resented the cavalier attitude of Greenleaf toward their writing skills, at least in retrospect...that was never the case with me. I knew exactly where I stood and really didn't care because it was only an enjoyable hobby with me anyway. I learned a lot from writing those books, but not due to any effort by Greenleaf editors, that's for sure,” says “Lewis” of his Greenleaf career:

<http://www.bartonlewis.com/baleintro.html>

“One of my earlier novels was bisexual and no publishing house would accept it because it was neither gay nor straight and they had no idea how to

market it. So after I published my own books successfully (two anthologies and the bisexual novel), I was persuaded to consider other authors' works and the cooperative GLB Publishers was born." Lewis comes out, with a few words on the early history of GLB, from a June 1999 essay:

<http://village.fortunecity.com/villageplace/399/times/june99/glbpub.htm>

Warner also directs readers to a couple of sites for one of his more formal authors, Dorian Grey, and for one of his hippest, Fredryk Traynor.

More about Grey: www.dickhardestymysteries.com

An excerpt from his tenth novel:

<http://www.dickhardestymysteries.com/tpmchp1.html>

And news that Dorian Grey is probably ending his Dick Hardesty series with *The Paper Mirror*, and starting a new series. Here's an excerpt from a "chat" that appears on Grey's own website:

garyab: So it's final, then?

dorien: Yes, apparently so . . . at least with my current publisher. It was his decision to end it, and I have to respect it.

garyab: Did he ever give you a definite reason?

dorien: Yes, he feels the series has changed from its original course and no longer reflects the lives of average gay men.

garyab: 'Changed'? It's evolved, certainly. Life evolves; people don't stay the same forever. And what in the world is the definition of an "average" gay man?

dorien. No idea, but whatever it is, Dick, Jonathan and the gang ain't it.

garyab: But you're parting under good terms?

dorien: Oh, yes. As I've said so often before, I'll be forever grateful to GLB for giving me a start. It is the publisher's right to say what he does and does not wish to publish.

garyab: So what do you do now?

dorien: Look for a new publisher, of course...maybe not for the Dick Hardesty series, but for a new one. It ain't gonna be easy. And I'm looking for an agent, too.

garyab: And how's that going?

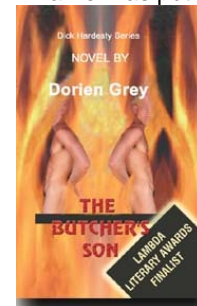
dorien: Don't ask. I'd have assumed that with ten books under my belt, finding an agent to represent me would be a snap. It isn't. But I'll keep at it."

The Sept. 28 chat with Dorien (scroll to the end for another dozen or so engrossing chats, in which Grey discusses the evolution of his series, what it's like to be nominated for an award, the ups and downs of a writing career, and more): <http://www.doriengrey.net>

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55 Titles And Counting: The Backlist

As a swift scan of the 55 titles listed here demonstrates, Bill Warner has put together an eclectic backlist, with a few recurring authors – in particular, Dorian Grey's ten mysteries, Chris Kent's schoolboys-will-be-boys stories (reminiscent of some of the books from Acolyte Press), Byrd Roberts' well-crafted page-turners, and of course the bisexual/SM fiction of the pseudonymous Bill Lee. The following list (from the database of **Alamo Square Press Wholesale** – I've read about 30 of the titles, but many so long ago that I couldn't conjure up a plot twist or a character's name to save a goldfish's life) gives a good idea of GLB's range; I've starred (*) several of the books I've read over the years and can recommend, in addition to the titles by Grey, Kent, Roberts, and Lee, all of which are fine exemplars of their particular genres.



The 9th Man, by Dorian Grey. Number two of the Dick Hardesty gay mystery series.

The Bar Watcher, by Dorian Grey. Third in the Dick Hardesty gay mystery series.

Between Trash and Tramp, by Byrd Roberts. Erotic novel of a bisexual hustler.

**Bi Ranchers Bi Mates*, by Bill Lee. A raunchy novel of bisexuality on the ranch, on the rodeo circuit, and in the bedroom.

Blood Warm, by Robert Burdette Sweet. A closeted gay writer sorts out his

choices.

The Bottle Ghosts, by Dorian Grey. Sixth in the Dick Hardesty mysteries concerning a gay alcoholic's discussion group.

Boys in Shorts, by Chris Kent. The author of *Boys of Swithins Hall* continues his tales of incorrigible youth.

Boys of Swithins Hall, by Chris Kent. A ribald tale of life in an English boy's school.

Boys Will Be Boys: Two Novellas, by Chris Kent. Two gay short novels.

Brass Ponys, by Marsh Cassidy. Two novellas.

Bravehearts and Memories, by Chris Kent. Two novellas.

A Breviary of Torment, by Thomas Cachet. Haunting poems of pain and torture.

**The Bunny Book*, by John D'Hondt. Loss and physical suffering contemplated through the fantasy, folklore and history of rabbits.

The Butcher's Son, by Dorian Grey. Gay detective novel.

Commonwealth Chronicles, by Byrd Roberts. Gay short story anthology.

Country Rogues, edited by Bill Lee. Male sexual exploits in the great outdoors.

**Dancing On the Barricades*, by John Coriolan. Novel about a gay dance troupe touring the US with a political motivation and a massive political plot in the background.

The Devil in Men's Dreams, by Tom Scott. Tales with a hard-hitting reality for gay men.

Different Slopes, by Bill Lee. A bisexual novel set in Napa County, CA.

Different Voices, by Walter Febrick. A novella and short stories of gay adolescence.

The Dirt Peddler, by Dorian Grey. Seventh in the Dick Hardesty series of gay mysteries.

The Duskouri Tales, by Byrd Roberts. Short stories set in a gay land of monsters and magic.

**A Familia Affair*, by Rod Palmer. An historic novel of gay activists in NYC in the '70s.

**Gay Warrior: Transforming Betrayal into Wisdom*, by Jim Fickey and Gary Grimm. Gay non-fiction.

The Good Cop, by Dorian Grey. Number five in the Dick Hardesty series.

**Good Night, Paul*, by Robert Peters. Touching, emotional poems in a fresh style.

**Guilty as Charged: The True Story of a Gay Beret*, by Jay Hatheway. The autobiographical story of the first Green Beret to be court-martialed for being gay.

**Hardball for Billy Budd*, by Richard Dann. A gay SM jock fantasy.

The Hired Man, by Dorian Grey. Fourth in the Dick Hardesty gay mystery series.

Homo Erectus, by Edward Proffitt. A gay poet of the new genre where rhyming can happen but isn't necessary.

Homoaffectualism: Male Bonding, by Paul D. Hardman. A global and historical exploration of love and affection between males.

Homonym, by Edward DeBonis. Gay poetry.

**Homophile Studies*, edited by W. Dorr Legg. Essays documenting the contributions of ONE Institute.

House of Broken Dreams, by Byrd Roberts. A novel of an aristocratic family and its closeted gay men and lesbians.

**In the Steps of Mister Proust*, by Stanley E. Ely. Gay novel.

Kings and Beggars, by Paul Genega. Contemporary American poetry.

The Paper Mirror, by Dorian Grey. Latest in Dick Hardesty Mystery series.

The Popsicle Tree, by Dorian Grey. The ninth Dick Hardesty gay mystery,

Rabbit's Leap, by James Hagerty. Gay novel.

The Ram Stam Boys, by Chris Kent. Another gay novel of British schoolboys.

The Real Tom Brown's School Days, by Chris Kent. More schoolboy buggery by the author of *The Boys of Swithins Hall* and *Boys in Shorts*.

**Rogues of San Francisco*, edited by Bill Lee. Gay male erotica.

**Rogues to Remember*, by Bill Lee. Explicit male sexual fantasies.

The Role Players, by Dorian Grey. Number eight in the Dick Hardesty series.

The Saint of Sodomy, by William Tarvin. Gay twists on poetry classics.

Sea and Stones: Voices from Atlantia by Thomas R. McKague. An old man

tells of his gay loves and lovers.

**Secret Buddies*, by Mike Newman. Erotic gay novel - back in print.

**Sex and the Single Camel*, by Phil Clendenen. An original erotic novel in a Moroccan setting.

**Snapshots of a Serial Killer*, by Robert Peters. A chilling and layered exploration of a fictional psychopath's thoughts and emotions.

Soft Slow Motion, by Dixie Schnell. Poetry from a lesbian truck driver.

Subway Stops: Collected Poems of Abnorman, by Abnorman. A joyous and brave collection of work that grabs the reader viscerally.

**A Time to Live*, by Jim Brogan. Novel set in SF, confronts the problem of aging in the period of AIDS.

Toward the Beginning, by Veronica Cas. Lesbian historical novel set in LA and Chicago.

Unruly Angels, by Ronald Nevans. "*Unruly Angels* is sexy, witty, intelligent, a little smart-alecky, and ultimately heart-breakingly wise and true," says Felice Picano.

The Weigh-in, by Winthrop Smith. Collected poems about the "underside of gay experience," with illustrations.

White Sambo, by Robert Burdette Sweet. Touching and realistic stories of gay male life.

**Zapped*, by Robert Peters. Two comic gay male novellas.

ASP Wholesale (no individual orders but if you spot a book you like, ask your local bookstore to contact ASP to become a client):

<http://home.earthlink.net/~asporders>

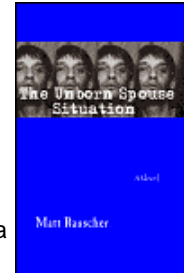
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Four Small Press Pleasures

The Unborn Spouse Situation, by Matt Rauscher, Lulu Press/
www.lulu.com, \$21.95

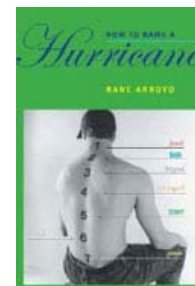
There are those editors, critics, and even some readers who look at a book and groan: "Oh, no. Not *another* coming-out story!" Not me. Every generation needs them. And Rauscher's first novel – so many first novels do dwell on coming out, don't they? – is more textured than most. Its 22-year-old central character, Augie Schonberg, is an aspiring filmmaker at a college with no film program, on the cusp of being queer when he moves into a rambling campus house renowned for its wild parties and hunky residents. First love hits him hard. He falls for housemate and campus activist Victor Radhakrishna, who reciprocates his increasingly fervent physical affection – except that Victor's parents are arranging his marriage to a suitable Indian bride. Rauscher, not so many years removed from his own college experience, captures the antsy angst of urgent desire with intelligent wit, and the emotional and sexual maturity of his young character with entertaining assurance. The first half of the novel, set on the college campus, is rife with the turbulence of small crises made immense by the hothouse environment of university life. But *The Unborn Spouse Situation* – a nifty title – really shines when Augie moves off campus, to Chicago, where he comes into his own gay self; a section set in London – he's been invited to Victor's wedding – is a wonderful mix of emotional liberation and soulful melancholy. In days of yore, when first novels could more readily find a home with known publishers, Rauscher's engaging debut surely would have found a more mainstream home than Lulu.com, but Rauscher has produced a professional-looking book on his own.

Author info: <http://people.lulu.com/users/index.php?fHomepage=148306>



How To Name a Hurricane, by Rane Arroyo, The University of Arizona Press, \$17.95

There are multiple forms in Arroyo's first collection of fiction – several short stories, a long narrative in verse form, a few impassioned performance-art monologues, and more than 40 pages of "flash fictions": one- and two-page vignettes with enticing titles ("Why Jaimie Won't Join the Softball Team," "Posing With Pablo," "Pablito Goes Butch," "Lalo Tells of a Lost Weekend After Too Much Saki") that serve up penetrating, incisive, and



innovative slices of gay Latino life. The lead short story, “My Blue Midnights” (which also appears in Wendell Rickett’s superb collection of gay blue-collar fiction, *Everything I Have is Blue*) sets the tone for the rest of this collection, which manages to be, by turn, lyrical and explosive and funny and erotic: it’s about the cultural tension simmering as a gay man comes out to his Puerto Rican family, even as he’s steered towards the gay bartender - and a new boyfriend - at a family gathering (a celebration “to celebrate the fact that nothing bad has happened for a long time”) by his sympathetic female cousin. The assorted-style stories in Arroyo’s vibrant excavation of social and sexual identity resound with a poet’s spirit and soul. Five poems: <http://www.poetrymagazine.com/archives/2003/Summer2003/arroyo.htm>

The Price of Temptation, by MJ Pearson, Seventh Window Publications, \$12.95

You might as well know, from the get-go, that Stephen Clair, the wayward and flagrantly self-indulgent but fundamentally good-hearted Earl of St.



Joseph, ultimately frees himself from the seductive but evil clutches of his evilly scheming kept man Julian Jeffries, and finds his way into the sweet virginal arms of young personal secretary Jamie Riley. There’s an inevitable story arc to the historical romance, even a queer entry like this one: despite barriers of class and compartment, true love always wins out. Pearson’s charming, easygoing novel, set in the England of not-so-good King George, is a well-crafted model of the genre – not quite as flowery, florid, and cartoonish as the amusing depiction of a well-muscled torso and flowing male locks

on the cover might suggest, but certainly a breezy and solidly satisfying read. An excerpt: <http://thepriceoftemptation.com/ChapterOne.htm>

Sottopassaggio: A Novel, by Nick Alexander, Lulu Press/ www.lulu.com, \$17.99

It’s a sequel of sorts to Alexander’s debut novel, *50 Reasons To Say “Goodbye”*, but this quirkily-titled sophomore novel stands sturdily on its own – though anyone charmed by the author’s understated wit and engaging central character will surely want to pick up the first book.

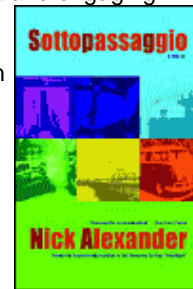
As novels go, *50 Ways* was an eccentric treat – in the main, it consisted of 50 short chapters, caroming between darkly caustic and energetically comic, about eternally optimistic Mark’s quest for the perfect lover.

Sottopassaggio (“an underground tunnel or passage enabling pedestrians to cross a road or railway,” according to Webster’s: the metaphor becomes clear as the novel is read) is a more traditional work. Mark is picking up the emotional pieces after the sudden,

shocking death of the lover he’d finally found. He returns to Brighton, the slumbering seaside resort town where his brother owns a home – and where, bit by bit, he opens up to life: old friendships are rekindled and new ones are forged, and love lost in a heartbreaking heartbeat is found again. Alexander writes about these essentials for a good life with an easygoing style that’s often effervescent – and downright hilarious in some sexual sections. But there’s a darker side that adds heft and dimension to the story: part of what draws Mark out of his shell is the violence enmeshing a troubled female friend. Alexander nicely balances the erotic and the profound with saucy good cheer.

Author info: <http://www.nick-alexander.com>

Alexander also produces a satirical fortnightly drawn from current news events – think *The Onion* with a British accent. “*Bush Withdraws Miers, Nominates Larry The Cable Guy For High Court*” is one of the headlines from the Oct. 18 edition: <http://www.bigfib.com>



JT LeRoy:

Fey Wonderkid or Manipulated Myth?

In the Oct. 17 issue of *New York* magazine, San Francisco author Stephen Beachy made a strong – and deliciously dishy – case for the argument that three-book author JT LeRoy (**Sarah, The Heart is Deceitful Above All Things, Harold’s End**) is a literary hoax of magnificent but unsettling

proportion. His buzz-generating feature started: *"In 2000, when JT LeRoy's novel Sarah was published, I attended his first reading in San Francisco, where local writers read in place of the pathologically shy author. Beforehand, Mark Ewert, who had helped organize the reading, shared rumors with me about LeRoy. Because almost no one had ever met him in person, some people thought novelist Dennis Cooper was actually the author, or maybe Ewert himself, Cooper's ex-boyfriend. Certainly LeRoy seemed suspiciously similar to the characters in Cooper's novels, fucked-up teenage boys in perpetual danger, or to the wise, otherworldly children in Ewert's Web film Piki & Poko. JT, or Jeremy, LeRoy, or "Terminator" (as he was first known), was a teenage hustler who'd been pimped out as a cross-dressed prostitute by his mother at truck stops throughout the South, until he landed on the streets of San Francisco in the early-to-mid-nineties. At the time, Ewert himself was sure that LeRoy was more or less whom he claimed to be; he'd spent hours on the phone with LeRoy. He even spotted someone at the reading whom he believed to be JT, appearing incognito. Ewert reported his hunch to Dennis Cooper, who reported it to JT. Ewert had spotted him, JT confessed, and JT was highly upset. The JT legend incorporated this anonymous, spectral presence into its mythology..."* Several thousand words followed; read the rest "A Search for the Identity of a True Literary Hustler" here:



<http://newyorkmetro.com/nymetro/news/people/features/14718>

Much hue and cry ensued. The online "Museum of Hoaxes" came down on the "Status: Uncertain" side of the question:

<http://www.museumofhoaxes.com/hoax/weblog/comments/3624/>

The Washington Post picked up on the story quickly, eliciting some semi-solid substantiation for LeRoy's existence from his literary agent, Ira Silverberg: *"Silverberg said that he had traveled to Cannes last year with LeRoy and remains convinced that he exists. Well, mostly convinced. 'As far as I know, the little person with whom I've spent time is JT, and that is my truth and that is what I believe,' Silverberg said. He echoed the allegation that Beachy has it in for LeRoy, calling him a 'poorly published novelist who's worked the same turf.' But he hedges a bit. 'A year from now,' he acknowledged, 'this could be a very different story'."*

<http://www.washingtonpost.com/wp-dyn/content/article/2005/10/12/AR2005101202422.html>

Does anyone beyond fringe literary nerds really care? That's the take taken by MediaLifeMagazine.com: *"...while the literary world is fascinated, the question is, despite all the column inches, does the wider world care? While LeRoy's books have been critically acclaimed and have done well, having been translated into 20 languages, they've not been runaway bestsellers. Tom Clancy he's, or she's, not, but rather more of a cult writer in the tradition of France's Jean Genet, a career criminal turned writer who never witnessed an event too sordid for inclusion in his novels..."*

http://medialifemagazine.com/artman/publish/article_693.asp

Over at the JT LeRoy blog (about, it seems, not by,) the defenders of are many, including queer novelist Bruce Benderson, and this missive from Mary Gaitskill:

"From Mary Gaitskill: what should have been quoted in the New York magazine article

To the Editors:

Considering that Stephen Beachy's article on JT Leroy is about lack of authenticity, it does have a certain small but strange feature: while I have in fact met and spoken with JT Leroy, I have never met or spoken with Stephen Beachy--and yet a reader of the article would reasonably conclude that I had. I wrote the description of my meeting with JT years ago and it was not meant to dispute his account of the same meeting, which was also written years ago. His account does not contradict mine, nor state that he spent lots of time staring into my eyes; one can see what a person's eyes look like, and notice that they have a pimple in, well, seconds.

-Mary Gaitskill"

Much more at: <http://jtleroy.blogspot.com>

And there's not much about the fuss on LeRoy's official website – except for a defiantly saucy photo on the home page: <http://www.jtleroy.com>

What do I think? I met LeRoy one afternoon late in 2000 when he, I assumed, came into A Different Light in San Francisco, a waif-like fellow accompanied by an obviously adult male, to sign copies of *Sarah*. Looked like a thin 19-

year-old kid to me, not even in a wig. The next year, I emailed LeRoy about reprinting a story from *The Heart is Deceitful Above All Things* ("Natoma Street," a pretty knowing account of an S/M encounter) in *Best Gay Erotica 2002*; an email of agreement was followed by a phone call to me in Canada, where I was living by then, thanking me for including the story. A few chatty emails followed. Not long after, I received two of LeRoy's trademark raccoon-penis necklaces. Nice PR touch. The fallout will continue, I'm sure. I'm leaning towards Beachy....



Books To Watch Out For: The Harrington Park List

The fiction for winter & spring:

The Millionaire of Love, by David Leddick - A tale of romantic obsession in Europe as an older man longs in futility for a handsome young man thirty years his junior.

Echelon's End: Planet Fall, by E. Robert Dunn - The star-lost crew of the tiny Pioneer 4 is desperately trying to find a way home to rejoin the battle for humankind's freedom, and its place in the universe.

Beyond Machu, by William Maltese - Will true love conquer all when two gay men find themselves engulfed in danger in Peru's jungles and the once-lost city of Machu Picchu?

Some Dance to Remember: A Memoir-Novel of San Francisco 1970-1982, by Jack Fritscher - This historical novel chronicles the Gay Lib movement in San Francisco in the 1970s through the romances and events in one group's loves and lives.

Alex in Wonderland, by Michel LaCroix - Gay, closeted, and appalled at the looming prospect of a hollow, arranged marriage, young Alex hits the road . . .

Confessions of a Male Nurse, by Richard S. Ferri - A darkly funny novel about a male nurse dealing with oddball characters, brain-frying incompetence, and romance.

Tales from the Levee, by Martha Miller - Historically based stories about a street in a Midwestern town that for a time in the 60s and 70s played host to a strong lesbian and gay community.

Skip Macalester, by JE Robinson - The coming-of-age story of an African American prep school boy struggling to find his place as he uncovers hidden truths about himself and nearly everyone he knows.

Chemistry, by Lewis DeSimone - A novel centering on two gay men, one of whom becomes mentally ill, their relationship, and their trials and tribulations.

Going Down in La-La Land, by Andy Zeffer - A candid, sexy, and outrageously funny look at what a young, gay actor can, and will, do to survive in Hollywood.

Transgender Erotica: Trans Figures, edited by M. Christian - An erotic anthology of fiction and personal account that explores the creative limits of human sexuality - the transgender experience. Long misunderstood and under-represented in literature, emotional and sexual transsexuality exposes what erotic experience can and should be - limitless.

The nonfiction for winter & spring:

Gay Tourism: Culture and Context, by Gordon Waitt & Kevin Markwell - A critical examination of gay tourism as a function of - and its effects on - gay sexual identities and communities.

Bringing Lesbian and Gay Rights Into the Mainstream: Twenty Years of Progress, by Steve Endean, edited by Vicki L. Eaklor - The lively memoir of LGBT movement activist Steve Endean, recounting his political career from the early 1970s to shortly before his death in 1993.

More Bear Cookin': Bigger and Better, by PJ Gray - The sequel to **Bear Cookin': The Original Guide to Bear Comfort Foods** presents more recipes, more helpful hints, and more special features from the kitchen.

Gendered Outcasts and Sexual Outlaws: Sexual Oppression and Gender Hierarchies in Queer Men's Lives, edited by Christopher N. Kendall & Wayne Martino.

Male-Male Intimacy in Early America: Beyond Romantic Friendships, by William Benemann - Draws on personal letters, diaries, court records, and contemporary publications to examine the role of homosexual activity in the lives of American men in the colonial period and in the early years of the new country.



Sex and the Sacred: Gay Identity and Spiritual Growth, by Daniel A. Helminiak - An enlightening examination of the queer spiritual experience by the author of the perennial bestseller *What the Bible Really Says About Homosexuality*.

Queering Teen Culture: All-American Boys and Same-Sex Desire in Film and Television, by Jeffery P. Dennis - Is the overwhelming boy-meets-girl content of popular teen movies, music, books, and TV just a cover for an undercurrent of same-sex desire?

A Gay Couple's Journey Through Surrogacy: Intended Fathers by Michael Menichiello - The moving, deeply personal true story of how a gay couple brought their daughter into the world through surrogacy.

A Season of Grief, by Bill Valentine - A memoir of one man's day-to-day struggle with the tragic and sudden loss of his partner.

The Handbook of Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual, and Transgender Public Health: A Practitioner's Guide to Service, edited by Michael D. Shankle - A comprehensive examination of the unique public health issues of sexual minorities.

Barebacking: Psychosocial and Public Health Approaches, edited by Perry N. Halkitis, Leo Wilton, & Jack Drescher - An examination of the psychological, social, and health issues involving intentional unprotected gay or bisexual sex.

Sons of the Church: The Witnessing of Gay Catholic Men, by Thomas B. Stevenson – More than forty gay Catholic men explain their experiences of growing up gay, as the author mounts a formidable argument for rethinking Church teachings on homosexuality.

Same-Sex Desire and Love in Greco-Roman Antiquity and in the Classical Tradition of the West, edited by Beert C. Verstraete & Vernon L. Provençal - A thoughtful collection of fresh insights into male and female homoeroticism in the ancient Greco-Roman world and in the Classical tradition of the West.

Bi Men: Coming Out Every Which Way, edited by Ron Jackson Suresha & Peter A. Chvany - A moving collection of personal essays from bisexuals that addresses unique issues while affirming the reality and validity of bisexuality.



PULP LEGACY, PART II:

An Interview with Victor J. Banis and William J. Lambert III

(In BTWOF/GM#19, Gunn wrote at length about the reissue of Richard Amory's classic pulp novel Song of the Loon. Here, he interviews two of that era's most prolific writers...)

By D. Wayne Gunn

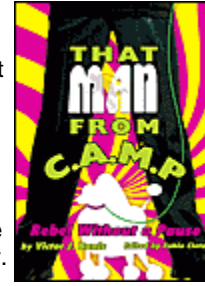
The first great explosion of gay writing has gone largely ignored. First, it was largely published by a number of small presses on the West Coast in the form of paperbacks. Secondly, the writing at the time was considered pornographic though little in these early novels would shock contemporary mainstream houses. Because of their unrespectable aura, "pulp" novels were seldom displayed on the owners' shelves, though they were read until their pages fell out and then thrown away. They are now devilishly hard to find, and some go for three figures when they do appear on the market. The widespread use of pseudonyms conceals the fact that some were the work of established writers who were "slumming," while many were the apprenticeship work of writers who went on to be picked up by New York publishers. A number of universities, besides the Kinsey Institute, have finally realized their social and literary value and begun adding them to their rare book holdings. These novels were, quite simply, the first body of writing to depict gay men in a favorable light and to affirm gay sex positively. They were also avant garde in their political and social concerns, very much a part of the spirit that ultimately led to Stonewall and a resulting sense of pride.

Two literary pioneers consented to be interviewed via e-mail in early April 2005. Victor J. Banis has published some 140 works under various names, including the vastly influential novel *The Why Not* (1966), the famous *That Man from C.A.M.P.* series (1966-1968), three of which were recently collected by Haworth Press, and one of the earliest studies of "Tijuana Bibles" (1969). William J. Lambert III has published over 100 works likewise under a variety of pseudonyms, beginning with the *Adonis* thrillers (1969-1970), the *Tlen* science fiction novels (1970), and perhaps the earliest gay horror novel, *Valley of the Damned* (1971). Both men are still writing and publishing, now some forty years after their careers were launched. The

interview was conducted by D. Wayne Gunn, who met the two men in the course of research for his bibliographical study of gay mysteries.

Gunn: What term do you prefer as a label for your early novels? pulp fiction? pornography? something else?

Banis: Oh, I think pulp fiction sounds good. Earl Kemp often referred to Greenleaf as a “porn factory,” and certainly the government censors of the sixties thought what we were doing was pornography. But I had difficulty then, and still do, seeing what I was doing that way. I suppose we were appealing to “prurient interests.” I have said before that if I were to rewrite some of those old books - *The Gay Haunt*, for example - I probably would tone down the sex; it seems to me now that it gets in the way. But we were a bit drunk, I think, on our new freedom to say things that couldn't be said before, and that's especially true in the gay arena, so we were constantly pushing the limits further and still further. So I guess in that sense we really were writing pornographic material. I still like “pulp fiction” better, though.



Lambert: You know, people can call my early novels (even my present novels) anything they want, and I'm okay with it. I have a friend in the art business who enjoys the shock on people's faces when he introduces me as “the porn writer.” And I've always been surprised by how “porn writer,” at least for me, has always had a certain kind of cachet. But personally, I've always thought of my early stuff as merely “books for and about homosexuals,” “books for and about straights,” “books for and about bisexuals” - with a lot of sex thrown in for good measure. I can't say I was even familiar with the term “pulp fiction” until a long time after I'd first published. “Pornography?” I never really thought of my books as *that*, if just because I always made a point to include a plot-line, no matter how tenuous. “Erotica” always seems decidedly too hoity-toity for my taste - although, that said, I've certainly been free and easy with that moniker when some hoity-toity circumstances warranted it.

Gunn: What do you consider your basic purpose in writing to be?

Banis: I personally believe every writer is responding to an itch he just can't manage to scratch any other way. I'm not entirely convinced any of us know, I mean, writers or any artists, really know, why or how we do what we do; but that's a little artsy, isn't it? For me, initially - and I started out doing lesbian and hetero books; *The Affairs of Gloria* was my first - but what I started to say was, it really was just a lark for me. I saw these books, and I thought, I can do that, and I did. Then, I found myself in trouble with the law, was indicted on obscenity charges, and really, it so ticked me off that I decided to keep writing. But the major incentive for me to do so was that I wanted to write gay novels, and at that time, in the early sixties, the prevailing climate was that you just couldn't do that, which only made me more determined. It took a while to find someone, Greenleaf Classics, to do my first gay novel, *The Why Not*, but once I found my “home” there so to speak, there was no looking back.

Lambert: While I've always admired authors who have some political and/or moral agenda - behind all the fun of Victor's *Man from C.A.M.P.* series there's no denying that it has a lot to say about the negativism of homophobia - all I've ever consciously been out to do is write, pure and simple. I've always enjoyed writing, and I always figured it would be a nice way to make a living.

Banis: Well, yes, really I wasn't trying to be a hero with any of these books; I was just having a lot of fun doing something that had been forbidden just a year or two earlier.

Gunn: At the time you began writing, what markets were available for what you had to say? Why did you choose the pulp market?

Banis: Well, I think I've indicated that already. I believed that there was a market out there for gay books, though the publishers at the time mostly did not. “Who would buy them?” was the usual response. And they were afraid of the legal repercussions, of course. Publishing books with gay themes, and especially pro-gay attitudes, was dangerous. I didn't know, however, how big that market would prove to be.

Lambert: By the time I entered the market - it was, I think, some three years after Victor made the proverbial “plunge” (a lot, if not all of his *C.A.M.P.* series were already on the stands) - he and the others had paved the way for us. I actually had several publishers available for my gay, straight, and bi work, including Brandon and Greenleaf, and the market kept on growing:

Bee-line, Orpheus, Venice, Frenchy's, Circle, Hamilton House, Blueboy, Surree, Parliament - I ended up publishing with all of those. While in the Army I was adopted by a surprisingly large gay "underground," and I actually started writing short gay stuff for my own amusement and for that of my fellow soldiers. Just after my (honorable) discharge, I spent some time with an Army buddy, who happened to have two pulp books. "Hell, I can write better than that!" I thought. My very first published gay book was written a chapter at a time for reading aloud to a group of my equally drunk-at-the-time gay friends. It was only at the book's conclusion that I thought I'd hate to see all my effort go to waste, so I bundled it up and sent it to Greenleaf. I still remember the acceptance letter that bemoaned my having committed the no-no of submitting in a script font (the only typewriter I had available at the time), but Greenleaf published it anyway. "Did I have anything else gay they could look at?" I had a straight detective novel, which I converted to gay (*Adonis*). It was quickly accepted and actually beat my official first book for Greenleaf - sci-fi *Five Roads to Tlen* - to the bookstands.



Gunn: How much did the publisher dictate what you were to write about?

Banis: My editors pretty much gave me a free hand. In *The Why Not* Earl Kemp wanted me to include the straight element, and I did, but I think he was looking for insurance. But this was my first gay novel, and his as well, and we didn't really know, remember, whether there was a serious market for gay novels. And sometimes an editor would ask for something on a particular theme, but I was very quickly popular, my books sold well, and the various publishers with whom I worked were generally glad to have anything I sent them.

Lambert: I can't say I've ever experienced much censorship, aside from resistance to man-with-a-woman-with-a-man bisexuality (gal-with-a-male-with-a gal was quite okay). Few publishers in the early days seemed to think the former kind of bisexuality even existed. A time did come when Greenleaf expressly asked to see more everyday characters - accountants, car salesmen, school teachers, students, shop clerks - as opposed to exotics - CIA agents, munitions salesmen, celebrities, the very rich - and wanted storylines likewise to reflect the lifestyles of the ordinary reader - sex and personal angst in city parks or in office supply rooms, as opposed to sex and espionage in the ruins of Great Zimbabwe. I've never had much of a face-to-face with my publisher, always seeming to be "off somewhere" other than where they've set up shop. Unlike Victor who was off bonding with the publishers of Brandon and Greenleaf, prosecuted (persecuted?) by the U.S. government for trafficking in pornography, I was living a life completely isolated from the group. It's only recently, Earl doing his memoirs, that I realized how out of the loop I was, compared to some of my fellow writers at the time.

Gunn: How were you paid? How much did you earn from your first novels? Were you able to live off your earnings?

Lambert: I'd mail in a manuscript, and a few weeks later I would receive a check in the mail. Usually on a work-for-hire basis, which means that once a manuscript was sold, my rights went bye-bye with it. Since I was sometimes writing books at a rate of one a week, I didn't think all that much about, or care about, retaining rights. It was only later, when I had a publishing history and a better comprehension of legalities, that I began negotiating to retain everything except first-North-American-serial rights. I don't recall ever being asked to revise one of my early manuscripts or do any rewriting after submission. Looking at some of those books, I'm not sure there was all that much editing done at the publisher's end. The going rate for a novel was anywhere from \$200 to \$1000, Greenleaf paying top-dollar, at least for me, at the time. I ended up with so many pseudonyms from so early in my career (and I suspect the same may hold true for Victor) because the publishers didn't want their readers to think that the books were written on an assembly-line basis. Was I able to live off my income from smut? (Now there's another possible descriptive term.) A qualified, yes!

Banis: I was paid \$700 for *The Why Not*. And yes, contrary to much of what has been written since, it was a legitimate contract with royalty scales and rights reversion, the works. That doesn't sound like very much money, but that was 1964, and I think today that would be \$3000 or \$4000, which wasn't really so bad. The *C.A.M.P.* books started, if I recall, at \$500, and in time I got \$700 and \$1000 for those; \$1500 for *The Gay Haunt*, and as much as \$7000 in time for some of the things I did. And yes, I made a living that way

for many years. But the thing was, I could write fast, and I wrote full time, so I could do a book in a week or so, and \$2000 or \$3000 a month was pretty good income then, though I can't say I made that every month.

Gunn: How did you define your audience and your relationship to your readers?

Lambert: I'm not sure I can, I've written for so many audiences. I'm embarrassed to admit that my goal has always been, and still is, basically no more than trying to provide my readers with a good read and get paid well for doing so. My ability to judge my success or failure seems based entirely on the size of my royalty checks and/or whether I'm asked to provide another book.

Banis: My answer is pretty straightforward since my audience was a gay one, and I think I just saw them and myself in the same terms. I was a gay activist, and I was writing for people much like myself, gay, and no longer willing to abide by the old rules. I think what happened with me and the gay readers of that era was that we shared and they responded to a common dream of a better world for gay people; and I think that is why young readers today can still identify with those (admittedly dated) books. We have come a long way, but the dream is still much the same.

Gunn: Since sex was a major component of these novels, prurient readers are going to be curious: How much of your novels is based on personal experiences?

Lambert: Time here to repeat my old-and-worn story of how a fan once approached me at a booksigning to express concern that if I didn't slow down sometime soon, I'd be lucky to reach 20. (I was 25 at the time.) Very little of the sex in my novels is based on my personal experiences. (Sorry, guys!) I spent so much time writing that I really didn't go out and personally experiment.

Banis: Gosh, I'm going to surprise you here and say that I was always a bit of a prude, and I still am, I think. I said earlier that there was a certain exhilaration in exercising this new freedom, but I always had to psyche myself up to write sex scenes. Sometimes I would skip over them and then go back and insert them when I was in the right mood. And some things I just wasn't any good at: bondage, S&M, that sort of stuff; and those things I handed to my then partner, Sam Dodson, or our secretary, Lady Agatha, and let them fill in those blanks. Fantasy? Well, yes, I think in my life I had my share of beautiful, and hung, men, but my track record couldn't compare to Jackie Holmes'!

Gunn: We hear often enough about the alleged negative influence of pornography. What kind of positive reactions did your books receive?

Banis: I think that the gay novels I wrote had a positive impact indeed. They opened doors for other writers, doors that had been closed before. *The Why Not* simply because it convinced Greenleaf to go with a gay publishing program, and of course in time Greenleaf published a vast catalog of gay titles, and other publishers soon followed suit. And especially *The Man from C.A.M.P.* because it utterly shattered the stereotype of what gay novels and gay protagonists could be, and made possible the incredible variety of gay material that followed. And it wasn't just writers, either; I think that we gave gay readers permission to see themselves in a new and positive light; and I know that Earl has told me that William was one of their best-selling writers, so certainly he had an impact as well. But I have to say that the real credit must go to Earl, who had the courage and the foresight to buy and publish books that were unlike anything that had gone before. And there were others, of course. Gil Porter of Sherbourne Press ventured into the water with some early novels by James Colton, who was Joe Hanson.

Lambert: I've remained pretty much isolated from any of my readers' opinions, whether pro or con. I've never had anyone say to me, "William, you have changed my life."

Gunn: What do you consider to be your major literary contribution? Which novel are you most proud of, and why?

Lambert: I'm not in the least convinced that I've made *any* major literary contribution (and I'm not being falsely modest here). I've always strived just for the presentation of a good read: one I enjoy, one I hope the reader will enjoy, never consciously with any other agenda. I'm neither consciously proud of any of my work, nor disappointed by any of it. I've merely been lucky to have "fathered" a couple hundred literary "children," pretty much finished with each and every one as I judged him/her sufficiently able to head on out into the big wide world, pleased when one or more sent home, on

occasion, a bit of money that allowed their dear dad to keep on doing what he was doing. That an article of mine ended up in a retrospective of *The Advocate* as being somehow reflective of the Vietnam War decade came as a complete surprise to me; at the time I was merely relaying a personal experience that I found interesting (albeit personally unflattering) rather than making some kind of commentary upon the military establishment, gays, and the handicapped.

Banis: I don't know that I think of any of my books as "literary." I did so many books and of such a variety, it's hard to pick favorites. The *C.A.M.P.* books, as I mentioned, had a tremendous impact, and it is gratifying to know that you made a difference. I did better writing in other books, I think. *This Splendid Earth*, for example. I also did some dreadful writing from time to time, but every artist deserves to be judged by his best work, doesn't he? And only the mediocre artist is always at his best. What is interesting, I think, is that it is quite rare for any writer to outlast his immediate generation, so it is exciting to see young people today reading and presumably enjoying some of my old pulp works.

Gunn: Where do you place yourself in the development of gay literature?

Lambert: Well, I do seem to have been there when gay literature really first blossomed. My books do seem to have been successful, judging from sales and invitation to submit additional material. My books do seem to continue to be popular with readers and publishers. So I guess you can color me a survivor in the genre.

Banis: I do see myself as a pioneer in gay literature. Not that there weren't gay books before mine, but there weren't so many of them, and they were mostly of the "sad young men" school of writing. It is little wonder that gays in the fifties saw themselves in such a negative light, when you go back and look at what we had to read. I don't think I was much influenced by those early gay writers; I was probably more influenced by the spirit of liberation that was just blooming when I began to write and that inspired me to introduce a new kind of gay hero. Michael Bronski dedicated *Pulp Friction* to me, Bruce Benderson, Joseph Hanson, and Marijane Meaker [see her interview, *LBR*, Jan.-Mar. 2005] and "all of the other authors, living and dead, who for decades before Stonewall pioneered what we now call gay and lesbian literature." I don't know who wouldn't take pride in that.

Gunn: What is your assessment of the current gay literary scene? Whose works are you now reading?

Banis: It surprises me that, all these years later, we have not yet seen the "great gay novel" or even the "great gay writer." What we did, however, William and I and all those others in our field, was be part of a revolution, and it generally takes a century for the dust to settle from any revolution, so maybe it's a bit early yet. I very much enjoyed Mathew Stadler's *Allen Stein*, and the story "Brokeback Mountain" in Annie Proulx's *Close Range: Wyoming Stories*. Michael Chabon's *The Amazing Adventures of Kavalier and Clay* was wonderful. I think Greg Herren is closer to what we did, and he is a terrific writer with great potential. I read prolifically, I just finished reading a trio of Maugham's plays, including *The Letter*, which is so much better than the movie. Gay material? Well, Herren's *Bourbon Street Blues* was the last thing, I think, and I mean to pick up his newest one.

Lambert: I can't give you a valid specific assessment of the current gay literary scene. I'm not really "into" my gay competition, although I do admit to having recently read and reviewed an interesting gay "period" piece, *The Phoenix* by Ruth Sims, feeling comfortable in reading it because I've never written a gay period piece and doubt that I ever will. And I'm reading *The World of Simon Raven*, recommended by a friend who thought I might enjoy it - which I am. I suspect I've a masochistic penchant for the game of cricket, and the book, so far, is full of it.

Gunn: What are you working on now?

Lambert: The last few years I've been writing in the gay genre under my pseudonym William Maltese. I've a Stud Draqual Mystery series going. I'm involved in my One-Hand Read™ series, which are reversions to the old gay pulps (think Greenleaf). My gay romance/adventure, *Beyond Machu*, is coming out from Haworth. I've a new gay sci-fi book, *Bond-Shattering*, out, and a gay sci-fi novella in the works. I've another German-language book due out the first of next year; my short "Doppelmörder" garnered quite a bit of notoriety and rave reviews there. I'm trying to finish the book of short stories I promised Green Candy.

Banis: I'm always working on half a dozen things at once. My memoirs, *Spine Intact, Some Creases*, was just published in a limited edition. I'm

finishing a futuristic novel, *Angel Land*, that I like a lot.

Gunn: Is it easier or harder to get published these days?

Banis: For me, it's harder getting published today. By the seventies, pretty much everyone in publishing knew me or knew of me, and doors were always open, but those editors and publishers are mostly gone now, and I'm not far removed from the slush pile. I'm fortunate to have had my editor on *Spine Intact* and *That Man from C.A.M.P.*, Fabio Cleto, who has worked long and hard to see me back in print, and I am certainly grateful. Mostly, though, I write today for my own pleasure, so it is just frosting on the cake if something makes it into print and anyone else gets to enjoy it too.

Lambert: It is *not* easier to get published these days: especially if you're a new gay author, especially these last couple of years with most of the major publishing houses deciding to jettison their gay imprints. Millivres/Prowler, one of the largest European publishers of gay literature has cut its new-book production. There is, of course, self-publishing, which has made best-selling stars out of a couple of authors into teenage coming-out stories, but, for the most part, that venue is still looked down upon by just about everyone in the book industry and is, I think, best exploited by established authors who already have a loyal readership base. There's just nothing today like the monthly output of gay books that existed during the sixties and the seventies.

D. Wayne Gunn's last published interview was with French author Roger Peyrefitte for Gay Sunshine, Spring 1980, reprinted in Volume 2 of Gay Sunshine Interviews, edited by Winston Leyland, 1982. Scarecrow Press published The Gay Male Sleuth in Print and Film, 2005.



The Blogs: More Of Writers On Writing

Brent Hartinger and Timothy J. Lambert write about the process of writing on their blogs: *"I have finished the first draft of Double Feature (which is the third book in the Russel Middlebrook series). Obviously there is much more work that needs to be done, but it's very nice to have a completed draft. I love it, but that means nothing, since I love all my first drafts. (Next in my emotional progression will come "panic," "despair," "hate," and, finally - hopefully - "acceptance"):*

<http://www.livejournal.com/users/brentsbrain>

Actually, Lambert recently has been writing about hurricanes, since Rita brushed by him, and his dog, who is a comfort. But here's what he said about the release of **Three Fortunes and One Cookie**, the fun novel he co-wrote with Becky Cochrane: *"Three Fortunes and One Cookie is available in bookstores now. Woohoo! And who knew? We'd heard at least three different release dates for it, all of which were in September, so I really wasn't expecting to see it for at least another week. I'm glad I still get the same giddy feeling whenever a new book of ours is published. And now I have that same ol' Will people like it? anxiety lingering by my side as the days go by. But even that's a good thing, in a way. I'd be disappointed in myself if I didn't give a flying crap what people think of our work. Be glad. I just deleted three paragraphs of rambling thoughts."*

<http://www.livejournal.com/users/timothyjlambert>



Linmark:

'Hilarious & Harrowing, Holy & Profane'

Prime Time Apparitions, by R. Zamora Linmark, Hanging Loose Press, \$15.

Reviewed by D. Antwan Stewart

R. Zamora Linmark, in his collection *Prime Time Apparitions*, is a temporal landscapist cross-pollinating the secular with the spiritual, the celebrated with the infamous: where, for example, the speaker in "A Letter to Clair Danes from a Fan in Manila," is sympathetic toward the actress who has been culture shocked by the conditions of Manila - where she has just filmed a movie - despite how the City Mayor has called a ban to all her movies and

"The papers and glossy fashion magazines . . . [christen her] 'Unknown,' 'Uncouth,' 'Uncultured,' 'Unconscious.'" The speaker's sympathy is borne from a theme that tempers each poem in the book: a desire to dislocate the reader from his/her comfort zones and allow the reader to experience a cultural moment beyond what is merely universal, but more importantly, those moments that beseech us to accept our human frailties and enchantments as the natural order of human experience.

And, as Faye Kicknosway states in her (lyrical) introduction: "Parts of [Linmark's] life climb in and out of his writings, but he takes great liberties with them, undressing himself of them to such an extent he becomes, on his page, a character he has never met." I found this to be an incredibly profound insight in relation to how Linmark has such utter control in each of these poems. The pendulum swings not just back and forth in these poems, but around and around, forming helixes and whole galaxies so nimbly that the hilarious, the harrowing, the scintillating and the discombobulated all conspire to present us with poetry as fresh and new as the birth of the worlds that Linmark writes. In other words, Linmark may know his subjects a little too well and in writing about them they, more and more, take on profound meanings in which the poet must explore and grapple with what he first perceived as one meaning has suddenly become a transcendent moment, and in turn, the reader is pulled into a beautiful vortex, all the while trying to hitch a ride on the shifting pendulum. For example, in the poem "Sensory for Nine," Linmark presents us with a suite of sorts, nine vignettes detailing the sexual exploits of the speaker. However, Linmark handles this subject with extreme caution and honesty. And it is the honesty of each of the nine "sensory" moments that allows their tenderness and heartbreaking presence to transcend human spectacle; the experience of the poem becomes something holy:



*A bottle of half-filled whiskey
smuggled in for excuses and emptied
within minutes strategically stood
between us to perform a ritual: Skin,
which required a complete revolution
before the offering of tongues to men
who have perished in that unnamable
chasm some mistakenly call "passion."*

This excerpt is from the first stanza of the poem, and dutifully, it sets up how, in each of the following eight sections, the speaker engages in a series of erotic trysts with various men who are of various ages and significance to the speaker. For example, they are men who devirginize the speaker, or are men who enchant the speaker and their sexual experience becomes one of lust, and of course there are those experiences in which the speaker confuses love and lust for certain men. Nevertheless, Linmark writes each section as if he has had a long while to live with these experiences, and therefore, the reader is allowed to revel in the psychological, catholic, and personal ramifications these experiences have had on the speaker. And for that, the poem is enriched because the reader senses a continual struggle on behalf of the speaker to reconcile many of the disconcerting emotions the poet/speaker feels. And that makes the experience wholly identifiable, and not necessarily an experience that is peripherally recognizable, but an experience that incorporates a wide scope and vision: readers may relate to the experience as if it has happened to them recently, or the experience may recall a distant memory that has been excavated from the unconsciousness - either way, Linmark writes these poems so that understanding, and hopefully transcendence, may be achieved on any level.

Finally, in his poem, "Says the Kiwi Bird," Linmark revisits the shocked zones of foreign cultures. In the last two couplets he writes:

*I know I am only a kiwi bird
(Okay, a poet's muse for the first time tonight)
But I do understand the laws of territoriality:
Nuisance, and, above all, creation.*

Writing in the voice of the kiwi bird, Linmark traverses the oft-traveled terrain of the catholic and the personal. However, in these final couplets his achievement is greater than merely (if not profoundly) stating the obvious: that catholic and personal are often mutually inclusive experiences. He says somewhat of the opposite as well: even if the personal and the catholic, at worse, cannot co-exist, or, at best, does indeed become a nuisance to try to

reconcile the similarities and differences, there is the opportunity to create an experience that is hilarious, harrowing, tender and honest, holy and profane, that even in the worse cases, will provide some fertile ground in which a multitude may plant their seeds of experience and see how beautifully each one blossoms, or even wilts.

D. Antwan Stewart is James A. Michener fellow in poetry at the Michener Center for Writers in Austin. His poetry appears or will appear in New Millennium Writings, The Seattle Review, Paper Street, Poet Lore, di-verse-city, storySouth: The Best of the South 2005, and others. He is poetry editor for Bat City Review (batcityreview.com).

A poem by the reviewer: <http://www.storiesouth.com/fall2004/stewart.html>



Arsenal Pulp, Gore Vidal, Paul Lynde, Life as a Cadet

With the closing of another Vancouver independent bookstore in mind, *Xtra West* interviews queer-friendly Arsenal Pulp Press publisher Brian Lam:

http://www.xtra.ca/public/viewstory.aspx?SessionId=cd03019a-79e0-4866-b135-00ff6a5df45&AFF_TYPE=1&STORY_ID=944&PUB_TEMPLATE_ID=2

"Age cannot wither him" is the headline on this rambunctious interview with 80-year-old Gore Vidal. *"He was friends with Christopher Isherwood, who had a very lively dotage in Los Angeles. I wonder if Vidal, a great admirer of his prose, holds him up as a role model of sorts. "Well, he drank a lot. Don (Bachardy), Isherwood's boyfriend, did him an ill service by insisting on printing every word of his diaries, which I call 'the hangover diaries.' He would have a wonderful evening the night before when you were with him - very happy - and then the next morning he'd have a ghastly headache and write about how much he hated everybody he saw the night before. This did him a disservice, not to mention those of us so described. These were not precious insights."* The full interview:

<http://books.guardian.co.uk/departments/biography/story/0,6000,1574752,00.html>

Karl Soehnlein (*You Can Say You Knew Me When*, Kensington Books) on his adopted city: *"I interviewed a lot of people for this book who lived in San Francisco in the Beat era and there was this sense of discovery, wonderment at the kind of freedom they found here, and I don't think that was the same for the people who came here during the boom. There was wonder in the '90s about what technology could do, but it was mostly just about how much money could be made."* The full interview:

<http://www.villagevoice.com/people/0537.interview.67646.24.html>

Dan Savage on being married, and his new book *Commitment*:

AE: Are you surprised, at this point in your life, to be living the life you have?
DS: *Absolutely. I came out in 1980. I'm surprised that I'm still alive, frankly, much less living with my kid and my... my... husband. Ugh. I still can't get use to saying that word. I still call Terry my boyfriend, only now DJ [Savage's son] corrects me. "Daaaaaad," he says, "he's not your boyfriend. You're married now." It's ironic, isn't it? Words and rituals that feel a little off, stuff that feels like it doesn't quite fit, will seem completely natural to kids DJ's age. We grew up without any of these rights, and they'll always feel a bit spangly to us. But for DJ, and for gay kids growing up now, boys marrying boys and girls marrying girls will be a normal part of the adult world."* The full AfterElton interview: <http://www.afterelton.com/print/2005/9/dansavage.html>

Mike Sacks in *Salon* (watch a brief ad for access) wonders why it took so long for a biography of "the strange, sad life of legendary gay comic actor Paul Lynde" to appear:

<http://www.salon.com/books/int/2005/08/23/lynde/>

Buff reality star (*Amazing Race* winner and *Kill Reality* co-star Reichen Lehmkuhl tells all about his tell-all book:

AE: What's next for you?

RL: *I'm putting out a book in 2006 called Here's What We'll Say. It's about all the lies I and other gay cadets had to tell to survive as gay cadets at your*

U.S. Air Force Academy. *I'm telling ALL.*" (He sold the book this month to Don Weise at Carroll & Graf, for publication in September 2006.) The full AE interview: <http://www.afterelton.com/TV/2005/8/reichen2.html>

Thoughts on YA novels and the censorious right: "As the Bookslut.com blog has made us all aware, there has been a steady upswing in banned and challenged books in school libraries lately. I paid only casual attention to what goes on in Oklahoma and Arkansas (and Virginia and Texas and...), until I read two books that would have set off all kinds of alarms for groups like Parents Against Bad Books in Schools (no, I'm not making that up)..." http://www.bookslut.com/features/2005_08_006244.php

Tobias Schneebaum (*Keep the River on Your Right*) died in September. Allan Gurganus interviewed him a few years ago for *Bomb*: "The adventurer, nearly 80, is now at home and receiving. A rail-thin man, fiercely kind, he looks as beaky yet contained as an Iberian aristocrat. Head lifted, his profile itself seems an instrument of listening. Surviving hip-replacement surgery, this strider of the world now lists a bit. But his every step looks meditated, then undertaken, then somewhat jauntily enjoyed.

<http://www.bombsite.com/schneebaum/schneebaum.html>

Douglas Cruickshank reviewed Schneebaum's *Secret Places: My Life in New York and New Guinea* for Salon in 2001: "...a small, odd and sometimes incandescent book about life, death, love, sex, tribal culture, magic, art, aging, transcendence and cannibalism. It's a fey, curiously charming piece of work, and so is its author."

<http://www.salon.com/books/feature/2001/04/13/schneebaum/>

And here's a review of a documentary about Tobias:

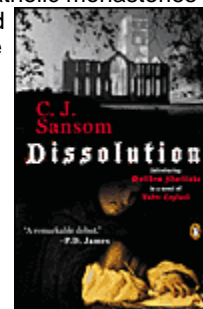
<http://www.villagevoice.com/film/0114.camhi,23547,20.html>

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The Secret Lives of Cromwell-Era Monks

Dissolution, by C.J. Sansom, Penguin Books, \$14 For fans of historical mysteries, this one's a treat – debut novelist Sansom invests the era of Thomas Cromwell and his over-arching dissolution of Catholic monasteries in 1537 with an irresistible synthesis of historical fact and a novelist's fancy. Why did I read this novel? I was in the country, brought the wrong bag of books to read (they were books I wanted to write about, which is not nearly as pleasurable), and wandered into a co-owners bedroom to see what he had on his bedside table (he has a good straight man's taste in mysteries...). Why recommend it? Sodomy amongst the Brothers, of course. Sansom's central character, sent to close down a Benedictine monastery, is as repulsed by sodomites in his midst as any Cromwell henchman ought to be; but in the end the main gay character (or, in the language of the era, the main pederast) comes off as rather noble, incidentally heroic, and, with a spiritual intelligence, is ably conflicted about the disparity between his physical needs and his religious vows.

Author info: <http://www.murderbooks.com/inter4.php>



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