



In This Issue...

Interviews:

Debut Fiction

- [Mack Friedman.....2](#)
- [Richard McCann.....2](#)
- [Barry McCrean.....4](#)
- [Vestal McIntyre.....4](#)
- [Sulayman X.....5](#)

The Gay Men's Edition

Volume 3 Number 2

By Richard Labonte

Interviews:

Gay Men's Fiction

- [Dennis Cooper.....5](#)
- [Harlan Greene.....6](#)
- [Aaron Hamburger.....7](#)
- [Thorn Kief Hillsbery.....8](#)
- [Keith McDermott.....9](#)

Books and Awards

- [Walt & the Bearcats... 10](#)
- [Lammy Processing..... 11](#)
- [Lammies: My Top Five and Some Likes..... 12](#)
- [Lammies: The Compiled Fives..... 13](#)
- [ALA Stonewall & Publishing Triangle Awards..... 17](#)

Interviews, Opinions, Lists: The All-Lammy Edition

This being **Books To Watch Out For/Gay Men's Edition**, with a particularly literate readership, I can't imagine that every subscriber hasn't already read each of the five 2005 finalists in the two main gay men's fiction categories. In case not, think of this as the *Entertainment Weekly* Oscar-roundup equivalent of getting you all ready for the Lambda Literary Awards in May – I've assembled snippets of (and in some cases entire) interviews with all but one of the authors of the finalist titles, to provide some flavor of the thinking that went into the various books in both categories.

For **Gay Men's Fiction Debut**: excerpts from Alistair McCartney on Mack Friedman's *Setting the Lawn on Fire*, Felicia Sullivan on Vestal McIntyre's *You Are Not The One*, and Huriyah Magazine online on Sulayman X's *Bilal's Bread*, and an interview from Richard McCann's website about *Mother of Sorrows*; alas, no one seems to have interviewed Barry McCrean about his memorable and original novel, *The First Verse*.

And in the **Gay Fiction** category: www.denniscooper.net on Dennis Cooper and *The Sluts*, Jameson Currier on Harlan Greene's *The German Officer's Boy* (from *Velvet Mafia*), an excerpt from Stephen Vinder on Aaron Hamburger's *Faith for Beginners*, an interview from Thorn Kief Hillsbery's website about *What We Do Is Secret*, and an excerpt of an interview/review by the late Patrick Giles on Keith McDermott's *Acqua Calda*.

The list of Lammy finalists does matter – to authors of course: the validation of peers and the recognition of others are both wonderful; to publishers, some of whom take a chance on the books that make it to the final five, and who are ever looking for any kind of publicity that might goose sales; and even to readers, eager for guidance on what to read.

The moan has been that the "Gay Publishing Boom" went bust a few years ago, but the reality – except, it must be said, for lesbian writers and mainstream houses - is that the quality of queer books is as good as it ever was, that every year sees work by a number of new whippersnapper writers (young and older), and that, as the publishing world turns, new publishers and imprints emerge. Five years ago, who had heard (as founts for queer lit) of the University of Wisconsin's Terrace Books imprint (two nominations), Soft Skull Press (three nominations), Bold Strokes Books (five nominations) or Suspect Thoughts Press (six nominations); and Carroll & Graf (seven nominations) was around, but without a discernable queer line.

To be sure, older queer presses are finalists – Alyson Books (five nominations) and Cleis Press and Bella Books (three nominations each) are represented, as they have been for a while; mainstream publishers like St. Martin's, Houghton Mifflin, Beacon, Random House, Harcourt, Kensington and others got about 25 of the 100 nominations; and assorted university presses got 10 or so. Canadian publishers are well represented, which is nice (hey: I live in Canada) – Tundra, Raincoast, Arsenal Pulp, Talon Books. And it's encouraging that there are several of what might be called one-person publishers with nominations this year: Redbone Press, West Beach Books, Annabessacook Farm, GLB Publishers, Seventh Window. Nice. There's even what's essentially a self-published book this year – W. Randy Haynes' *Cajun Snuff* from Publish America, a nomination noted on the site's home page (www.publishamerica.com). The wealth was spread.

After the interviews: my own list of the books I wish had been nominated in the gay fiction and other categories, and some commentary on the nomination process itself. It's been a turbulent few months for the Lambda Literary Foundation and the Lambda Literary Awards, but from the perspective of my involvement with the nomination/finalist process this year (and for more than 15 years previous), executive director Charles Flowers has pulled things together with overworked aplomb and grace after the Lambda Foundation board's decision last year to, essentially, start over again with the direction the Foundation was taking and with the *Lambda Book Report* itself. I missed working this year with former executive director Jim Marks, former *LBR* editor Lisa Moore, and Jonathan Harper, who



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.

» [Click here](#) to subscribe.

- » [Click here](#) for more info.
- » [Click here](#) to tell a friend about the Lesbian Edition.

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.

- » [Click here](#) to subscribe.
- » [Click here](#) for more info.
- » [Click here](#) to tell a friend about the Gay Men's Edition.

More Books for Women

covers the finest in thinking women's reading, plus mysteries, non-sexist children's books, and news from women's publishing. Written by the owners and staff at Women & Children First, and friends.

- » [Click here](#) to subscribe.
- » [Click here](#) for more info.
- » [Click here](#) to tell a friend about More Books for Women.

Advertising & Sponsorships

BTWOF is financed by subscriptions, rather than advertising or book sales. Publishers and individuals who wish to help launch BTWOF are invited to sponsor any of the first 12 issues. Write to [Mozelle Mathews](#) for sponsorship information.

Housekeeping

If you want to change your BTWOF email address or other contact information, [click here](#) to update:

- » your subscriber profile
- » whatever has changed.

Finding BTWOF

BTWOF is published by Carol Seajay and Books To Watch Out For.

www.BooksToWatchOutFor.com
 Email: Editor@BTWOF.com
 PO Box 882554
 San Francisco, CA 94188.
 415.642.9993.

Send books for review consideration for the **Gay Men's Edition** directly to Richard Labonte at
 7-A Drummond St W
 Perth, ON K7H 2J3
 Canada.

for a couple of years pulled the Lammy nomination process together with unfailing efficiency and courtesy. But what's important is that the institution – a crucial part of the LGBTQ literary scene – survives.

On a personal note: it's been about three months since my last installment of **BTWOF/GM**. My excuse, with apologies, is a bout with some nasty staph stuff. Really nasty. In short, hospitals are the last place I ever again want to go in order to get well. If there is a next time, I only hope that surgeons wash their hands really, really, well before coming anywhere near me...and, next year, I hope to bring you my own interviews with the queer boy finalists for the Lambda Literary Awards.

Gay Men's Fiction Debut: The Finalists

Setting the Lawn on Fire by Mack Friedman (Wisconsin)

From an interview by Alistair McCartney in The Advocate:

Alistair McCartney: I haven't read a novel in a long time that gets so beautifully, as yours does, at the mystery of adolescent queer desire, its strange magic, and how that follows us into adulthood. The novel dwells on and goes deeply into that mystery through the main character, Ivan. What is it about the space that draws you as a writer? How did you access that as a writer?

Mack Friedman: A wise old leather daddy once told me something very funny and true: 'Every first novel is a puberty novel,' he said. And he twirled his handlebar mustache (silver, with a dash of nicotine gold), and told me about his latest Viagra weekend with an old flame and a new slave. And I'll bet the look in his eyes was the same one he had 60 years ago after he jerked off with his best friend for the first time. You could see this youthful vigor and amusement brimming just inside, excitable and heroic and proud. That's the space that draws me. But I'm also fascinated by the thin line between prostitution and love, honor and desecration, consent and abuse, youth and adulthood. How we grow up, why we get into rough situations, and how we get out of them. The confusion, the terror, and above all, the overwhelming desire, the resilience. I think that glittering broken-down alleyway of adolescence is every gay man's past, including my own. It was helpful to me as a writer to mine my own back alleys. When I was a kid I kept a meticulous journal of my jerk-off fantasies. I found it a few years ago cleaning stuff from my parents' house. This book is, in a sense, a compendium of my boyhood desires, filtered by 10 years of adulthood and a damn good editor named Raphael Kadushin.

The full interview:

http://www.advocate.com/exclusive_detail_ektid26296.asp



Mother of Sorrows by Richard McCann (Pantheon)



An interview from the author's website:

Q: According to the press materials, you worked on *Mother of Sorrows* for seventeen years. Can you speak about the making of the book and why it took so long to write?

A: As a character in a Grace Paley story says, "There's a long time in me between knowing and telling." But of course that's not the only reason the book took a long time. In the graduate workshops in fiction writing that I teach, I sometimes ask my students, as a way of prompting them to write about things that they find difficult, "What's the story inside you that feels the hardest to tell?" And that's what I kept asking myself as I worked on *Mother of Sorrows*. As a result, I often needed time to work out my material in ways that were not only structural but also deeply personal. The first time I showed my editor what passed for a draft of this book — really a jumble of scenes, with some plot points sticking out here and there — it was far longer than it is now. It took me a long time to admit that this book was at heart a difficult love story between a mother and her son.

I should add that while I was working on *Mother of Sorrows* I was also stopped at several points by what I'll call Life itself. In May 1996, for instance, I underwent a liver transplant after waiting thirteen months for a donor organ. As one might imagine, this wasn't time dedicated to writing. For a long time, I was busy dying, and then I was busy with the work of being resurrected.

Q: You describe *Mother of Sorrows* as being "deeply personal." What is this book about for you?

A: For me, this is a book about the experience of multiple losses and what it feels like to be at least a provisional survivor. That's what ties the book together, starting with the

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



father's death, when the narrator is eleven, and then going forward toward the present, with yet more losses to come.

Q: In some ways, *Mother of Sorrows* might be seen as being as much about the relationship between two brothers as being “a difficult love story between a mother and her son.” Which of these stories came first?

A: Without question, what came first was the story of the mother and her son — the younger son, who worshipfully imagines her as “Our Mother of the Late Movies and the Cigarettes,” “Our Mother of the Sighs and Heartaches,” “Our Mother of Sudden Anger,” “Our Mother of Sudden Apology.” This was the story I knew I was going to have to write if I was ever going to come to grips with the relationship I’d had with my own mother. In fact, this book began with the writing of “My Mother’s Clothes: The School of Beauty and Shame,” which was the first story I ever published and which appeared in *The Atlantic Monthly*. It wasn’t until I was almost finished with the book, during the writing of “My Brother in the Basement,” that I came to see that it was also about two brothers — Cain and Abel, that’s how I thought of it — perhaps because I’d never before been able to write about my own real brother, who died suddenly when he was in his thirties.

Q: To what extent is *Mother of Sorrows* autobiographical?

A: Like the narrator, I grew up in Silver Spring, Maryland, in a post-World War II subdivision of identical brick houses with picture windows, each house tethered to a small lot. My father, like the narrator’s, died when I was eleven. And like the narrator, I grew up with a mother who was enormously mesmerizing, at least to me, and whose complicated inner life seemed far more real to me than my own. But *Mother of Sorrows* isn’t reality — it’s an homage to reality instead. Although it has its roots in the autobiographical, it is in the end a work of fiction, derived from the complicated interaction of memory and imagination, fact and invention. That is to say: I sometimes drew from life, but I also omitted stuff and made stuff up.

Q: Do you see the *Mother of Sorrows* as a novel, as some people have described it, or as a collection of interwoven stories?

A: I don’t always have a definitive answer to that question. I know that many of those who have read *Mother of Sorrows* regard it as being unquestionably a novel — and they do so for good reason, given that the book has a single narrator and spans nearly three decades in the life of an American family. And I sometimes see it as a novel, too, although I more often regard it as ten interwoven stories that fit together — like a mosaic, I imagine — to form a larger story that has the scope and (I hope) the cumulative power of a novel. In any case, that’s how I wrote it, piece by piece. In the end, however, I think a reader can perceive it in whichever way he or she wishes. What matters to me is not whether people read it as a novel or as a collection of interwoven stories but rather that they find that the individual stories are speaking to each other and gathering force as they go forward, revealing the sorts of things that can be known about characters’ lives only if you see them across time. For me, the livelier question — at least while I was working on it — was whether it would turn out to be a work of fiction or a memoir. It sometimes reads like a memoir, I think, in that the narrator’s retrospective examination of his life often has what strikes me as a kind of confessional urgency.

Q: How would you describe the book’s structure, given that it is not arranged solely in a strict chronology?

A: This is a book about lives that are not just being lived but also remembered — for this reason, I didn’t want a strict chronology. After all, memory itself is hardly chronological. Rather than simply tell a story straight through, I wanted to look quite closely at some particularly large and defining events in a family’s life — in the few years immediately following the father’s sudden death, to be specific — and then to explore the aftershocks of grief that keep going forward for almost thirty years. Before turning to fiction, I should note, I wrote and published only poetry for some years, and, as a writer who was trained first as a poet, I find myself drawn over and over to the fitting together of fragments to make something larger. For me, writing is largely a slow process of distillation.

Q: How would you feel about your book being shelved in the gay fiction section of a bookstore? Do you see yourself as a “gay writer”?

A: Of course the bookstore section marked “Gay & Lesbian” helps some readers find the books they’re looking for; but I suspect it also keeps other readers — readers of general literary fiction, for instance — from finding books they too would connect with and love. I’d hate to think of some of the writers I’ve loved best — such as Whitman and Proust, for instance, not to mention Tennessee Williams and Yukio Mishima — as being consigned forever to a nook marked “Gay & Lesbian,” as if their works were only of limited interest. As for me: I’m a writer of literary fiction, and I therefore imagine my work as belonging on a shelf with other writers of literary fiction, whether they are straight, like Tobias Wolff or Alice McDermott or Marilynne Robinson, or whether they are gay, like Michael Cunningham or Alan Hollinghurst. My gay characters, like my straight characters, live in

regular worlds that are filled with all sorts of people, just as we all do. Certainly being a gay man has affected my life and work; but so has my deep love of the works of Eugene O'Neill, say, as well as those of Tillie Olsen and Joan Didion. In fact, I sometimes think of *Mother of Sorrows* as my own version of *A Long Day's Journey Into Night* — although in a subdivision, with the brothers wearing Davy Crockett coonskin caps. But to be serious: for the most part, I find the term “gay writer” reductive. I say this not out of shame but rather out of loyalty to our great human complexity and to our vast human interconnectedness. Isn't that part of the vast project of literature — to imagine our lives and the lives of others as fully and completely as we are able?

(©2005 by Richard McCann)

Author info:

<http://www.richardmccann.net>

An excerpt:

<http://www.randomhouse.com/pantheon/catalog/display.pperl?isbn=9780679411765&view=excerpt>

Wesley Gibson interviews McCann — listen here:

http://www.blackbird.vcu.edu/v3n2/features/mccann_r_021605/mccann_r.htm

Read it here:

http://www.blackbird.vcu.edu/v3n2/features/mccann_r_021605/mccann_r_text.htm

.....

***The First Verse* by Barry McCrea**

(Carroll & Graf)

“Literary parlor games are transformed into occult activity in Barry McCrea’s first novel,” says Travis Jepperson in this *NY Press* review:

[http://www.nypress.com/listings/listing.cfm?](http://www.nypress.com/listings/listing.cfm?listings_id=109457)

[listings_id=109457](http://www.nypress.com/listings/listing.cfm?listings_id=109457)



.....

***You Are Not the Only One* by Vestal McIntyre (Carroll & Graf)**



From Felicia Sullivan’s interview in *Small Spiral Notebook*, Fall 2005:

Felicia Sullivan: In *You Are Not the One*, families and the complex relationships that families have with some of your characters (notably in “Disability” and “Nightwalking”) either serve as a dysfunctional backdrop or nagging point of reference, an entity in which your characters seek escape or sometimes reconciliation: can you perhaps elaborate on what role family plays in your work?

Vestal McIntyre: Families are difficult to write about, mainly because you have to differentiate between members of a group who are not the main character. That’s why none of my characters have families as big as mine. I’m the youngest of seven children. To try to portray so many characters in so small a space as a story seems impossibly reductive – I’m just not a good enough writer yet. The closest I come is the three siblings in “Nightwalking.” It’s funny that you point out – rightly – that in these stories the characters’ families are usually nagging and dysfunctional, when my own family is neither. Well, maybe a little nagging. But, growing up, I was much happier at home than at school, and my family was the one thing that I didn’t fantasize escaping...anyway, in my life, family is very important. I wouldn’t be a writer if I hadn’t watched my older brothers and sister grow up.”

The full interview:

<http://www.smallspiralnotebook.com/winter04/vestalinterview.shtml>

Author info:

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

From the book, the story “Octo”:

<http://www.opencity.org/mcintyre.html>

.....

***Bilal's Bread* by Sulayman X (Alyson)**

From an interview on huriyahmag.com:

Q: What would you like the readers to know about your book?

Sulayman X: I'd like readers to know that *Bilal's Bread* is a story about one boy coming to terms with his life — his sexuality, the domestic violence in his family, his life as an immigrant. I've tried to represent different points of view fairly — conservative Muslims, liberal Muslims, the American form of Islam as compared to a form of Islam taught in the Islamic world. Every gay Muslim, male or female, has had to come to terms with who they are, with how it affects their family, with how Islamic teachings need to be understood. This is just a story about how one boy did that.



Q: When it comes to any form of abuse, many Muslims are rather in denial about its existence in our communities. Do you think it is going to be even harder for them to swallow a homosexual incestual abuse?

A: It was a hard story to write, but it was based, in part, on some of the stories I've read and emails I've received concerning the way Muslim boys treat their younger brothers, or how they find a small, defenseless kid in the neighborhood to take out their sexual frustrations on — it's all just a reaction to forced separation of the sexes. Everyone's in denial about everything when it comes to sex, at least as far as the Muslim world is concerned. Nobody wants to talk about it, admit the truth. If you keep males and females constantly separated, older guys are going to find any way they can to relieve sexual tensions. I don't know how Muslims will react to my novel. I hope they can see that Bilal is a human being, not a statistic, that what he experiences is real, that sexual double standards exist and are harmful, that domestic violence exists and is harmful.

Q: What is next for you?

A: My next project is about a hustler/money boy who gets taken in by a Muslim family and slowly begins to change his ways. It's a much more hopeful and positive book.

The full interview:

<http://huriyahmag.com/summer/interview.sulayman.htm>

Huriyah: A Queer Muslim Magazine:

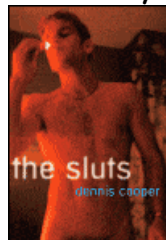
<http://www.huriyahmag.com/summer/index.htm>

Sulayman X's Queer Jihad Magazine:

<http://www.well.com/user/queerjhd/>

The author's "Confessions":

<http://www.well.com/user/queerjhd/confessions.htm>

**Gay Men's Fiction: The Finalists*****The Sluts* by Dennis Cooper (Carroll & Graf)**

From an interview with Cooper on www.denniscooper.net, and how he didn't think the limited-edition Void Press book would find an American publisher; it did: Carroll & Graf.

DC.N: The writing is different.

DC: I was going for the kind of horny everyman rhetoric you see on X-rated gay message boards and escort reviews and so on. The art in my writing is definitely there, but it's more internalized. The writing in *The Sluts* feels more casual, even though I worked really hard to get it to that point. It's blabbier writing, but the blab is as tight as I could get it. Still, it's my longest novel by far, just over three hundred pages.

DC.N: Why did you decide to publish it in a limited edition?

DC: Happenstance. I offered it to Grove Press, but they didn't want it. They wanted *God Jr.* instead. My agent told me that basically no one in the US would publish *The Sluts*. He said the climate in publishing was too conservative..."

DC.N: It's definitely the most X-rated of your books.

DC: Yeah, pretty relentlessly so. I'm really interested in the language of pornography, and this was the most I've ever gotten to work with it.

The full interview, excerpts from the book, and sites Cooper browsed while writing it:

<http://www.denniscooper.net/thesluts.htm>

Introduction to an interview with Cooper by Justin Taylor in *Bookslut*.

“When I had the chance to talk with Dennis Cooper recently, I was surprised at how laid back he was. Not that I expected him to embody his writing, but I think that I had been subconsciously expecting someone... intense, and maybe creepy. Instead, I found him to be engaging, entirely unassuming, and very kind. He seemed as interested in asking me questions about myself as in discussing his own work. We talked about his writing, how the publishing industry has changed over the years, and a host of other things. If there was one way in which he fit the stereotype of his literature, it was that he got most excited when the talk turned to music.”

Full interview:

http://www.bookslut.com/features/2005_02_004345.php

.....

***German Officer's Boy* by Harlan Greene (Wisconsin)**

The Boy Who Started A War: An Interview with Harlan Greene by Jameson Currier, from Velvet Mafia 17:

Currier writes: On November 7, 1938, Herschel Grynszpan, a young Jewish man living illegally in Paris, walked into the German embassy and shot Ernst vom Rath, a German diplomat. The assassination triggered Kristallnacht, the organized Nazi pogrom against the Jewish community inside the boundaries of the Third Reich and was the symbolic beginning of the Holocaust. Many historians have speculated that the young Grynszpan had intended to shoot the ambassador, Count Johannes Welczek, but according to author Harlan Greene in his new novel, *The German Officer's Boy*, the shooting was the accidental result of the seventeen-year-old Grynszpan's affair with the older, twenty-nine-year-old German officer. Earlier this year I spoke with Greene, whose prior works include two historical novels about gay life in Charleston (*Why We Never Danced the Charleston* and *What the Dead Remember*) and an admirable shelf of nonfiction books on Southern history.



Jim Currier: Where did you first hear or read that Herschel might have been gay?

Harlan Greene: I had been seeing it in footnotes of books for a long time. Because my parents were Holocaust survivors, I was always reading about the Holocaust. I first noticed the reference in the mid-1980s in a book by Frank Rector called *The Nazi Extermination of Homosexuals* and, to be frank, I didn't believe it. I thought someone was trying to write gay history into everything. Over time, it seemed something more credible to me.

JC: Why did you decide to novelize this story?

HG: I have published nonfiction and I really believe in the integrity of nonfiction — I published a biography of a minor South Carolina writer and that took seven years to write and that was also from having access to his voluminous correspondence — he lived in a Victorian house and kept every little bit of correspondence he'd ever written. But to do something where I didn't know the original language and would have to rely on foreign travel to do it correctly was beyond my ken. I'm not an academic. I don't have summers off. And that's not my field. I realized I wanted to do something with it and it seemed to me, long after I embarked on the novel, that I probably did take the right turn because there were very few facts out there.

Currier writes: In the novel, Greene has the affair between Grynszpan and vom Rath begin the summer of 1938 and continue until November, when Herschel, whose papers were not in order, was about to be deported from France. Greene's vivid, complex novel follows Herschel's imprisonment in France and his subsequent time at the Sachsenhausen concentration camp, and it is a masterful weaving of deception, twists, cover-ups, politics, and public relations ploys during Herschel's confinement. Throughout the novel, Greene intersperses many historical facts and documents, including the press release from the physicians whom Hitler sent to Paris to examine Grynszpan, Joseph Goebbels's speech in Munich the night before Kristallnacht, the radio address of American journalist Dorothy Thompson, and the postcards from the Grynszpan family.

JC: What sort of 'artistic license' did you use in creating this story as a novel?

HG: Herschel's imprisonment in Sachsenhausen — that's fact. The things that I invented were Herschel's family background and his angst — that's made out of whole cloth and there is a lot of foreshortening of the time, particularly after Germany invaded France. Herschel's first attorneys — they're based on truth — I only had their names. The way I got their personalities was when Vincent de Moro Giafferi supplanted them, they sued, saying that Herschel was their client. Some of the money raised for Herschel's defense was paid off to those attorneys.

JC: Was Herschel really a 'rent boy' while he was in Paris?

HG: The character of Dothan [Herschel's procurer in the novel] is whole cloth. Some of the specific books on Kristallnacht would talk about the claim of Herschel being gay, and it was hypothesizing on the historians' part to say he wasn't — Herschel lived in a part of town that was notorious for boy prostitutes. These historians didn't even realize what they were saying, so they gave me that suggestion. There were many famous rent boy cases at the time.

JC: Was it difficult to find a publisher for the novel?

HG: My agent started trying to send it out in 1996. And it's certainly gone through permutations since then. One major publisher accepted it and then the big wigs threatened to fire the editor. My agent kept saying he'd never seen anything like it. I was just assuming it was for the salability of it — that they were assuming it was box office poison. There was a verbal contract, which they had to rescind. People liked it, people hated it, people didn't do it. My agent was very persistent. Then I read an article in *Lambda Book Report* on the University of Wisconsin Press and saw that they did gay and Holocaust works, so that seemed to be a pretty good fit for this.

Currier continues: Harlan Greene's parents, Sam and Regina Greene, survived the Holocaust in Russian work camps during World War II. They were married in June 1939 shortly before war broke out. After the war, his parents moved to Charleston, where his mother had an aunt and a first cousin. Greene, born in 1953, was raised in Charleston where he now lives with his partner, Jonathan Ray. Greene began writing *The German Officer's Boy* in the late 1980s when he lived in Chapel Hill, North Carolina, where his companion at the time, Olin Jolley, was starting his residency in psychiatry at the University of North Carolina. In October of that year, Jolley was diagnosed with AIDS.

JC: Your own life has been a remarkable journey. How did your background play out while starting to write this novel?

HG: I started working on this novel right when Olin was diagnosed with AIDS. Ironically, it was on Yom Kippur of 1989 that he basically went into the hospital and almost died. He subsequently lived seven years. I think that's one thing that launched me into this novel — and I'm certainly not comparing my experiences with Olin being sick with Holocaust experiences — but what struck me in those first few months when Olin got sick and we weren't telling his parents — was that I was leading something of a double life, pretending everything was fine but there was this devastating experience that I was going through. It struck me that this might be what someone felt who was passing at the time — a Jew pretending not to be Jewish pretending not to be going through a tragedy. Olin's experience made me read a lot more stuff into Holocaust works and appreciate my parents experience more.

(Reprinted with permission, Jameson Currier)

Velvet Mafia:

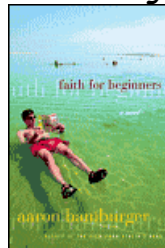
www.velvetmafia.com

J.S. Hall discusses the book's fact and fiction:

<http://www.q-notes.com/outinprint/>

.....

***Faith for Beginners* by Aaron Hamburger (Random House)**



From a NextBook interview by Stephen Vinder.

Vinder writes: *Faith for Beginners*, his first novel, finds Hamburger looking to Israel, where Jeremy, a college student still recovering from a near-fatal combination of Xanax and vodka, falls in love with a half-Muslim, half-Christian Palestinian, while his mother cheats on her cancer-stricken husband with a rabbi.

Stephen Vinder: What is your connection with the character of Jeremy?

Aaron Hamburger: A lot of times when I tell people the plot, the first thing they say is, "Oh, did you have a problem with drugs, and then visit Israel with your mother?" Which is pretty far from who I am. I've never smoked a cigarette in my life — I can't stand smoking — and I would never pierce my nose with a safety pin or dye my hair green or any of those things. So I'm always interested in people who are very performative and public, and have no boundaries and no shame. Or maybe they do, but express it in an outward way. I was just interested in getting into the head of someone who doesn't approach things the same way that I would. The one thing I think in which we are similar is that we both came from more religious backgrounds, and were both turned off by religion in our adolescent years.

Full interview:

<http://www.nextbook.org/cultural/feature.html?id=203>

.....

***What We Do Is Secret* by Thorn Kief Hillsbery (Villard)**

Excerpts from an interview on www.whatwedoissecret.com

Q: How well did you know Darby Crash?

A: I met Darby at this scummy Hollywood drive-in, Arthur J's. I was drawn to him more by the vibe he had than his notoriety or whatever. He was spooky and bratty and weirdly sensitive all at once with these flashes of intensity that weren't so much dark as shadowy. He wasn't all that street-smart and even the way he pretended to be was more or less a joke that he knew everybody was on to. At least everybody at Arthur J's. I spent time with Darby alone and with him and other kids who made that corner homebase till it was turned into a strip-mall. Highland and Santa Monica, northside. I went out to his mom's place in West L.A. once and saw all the Bowie paraphernalia in his room there. Spent the night. I never would have said that I knew him really well, but when you read these interviews with his former bandmates saying they didn't figure out Darby liked boys till a year after he died you have to wonder how well anyone knew him.



Q: As in well enough to write about him?

A: I find it interesting that few people have. The published writing that's come out of the L.A. punk scene so far has been skewed pretty heavily towards oral history, scenesters reminiscing into microphones. Not much in the way of literary interpretation, or using the scene as a point of creative departure.

Q: Did that influence you to write fiction instead of a memoir?

A: I never considered writing a memoir. That would bore me. This is way more fun. It's all one night from dusk to dawn and there's always something crazy going on. Zero let up. You can taste the anticipation for what comes next. Real life isn't like that. And the L.A. punk scene wasn't like that by the time I got into it. The Masque was gone and hardcore conformity loomed ahead. People weren't so original anymore. By compressing everything into a few hours in the lives of a tight little group of punks who *were* original I felt I could convey the high-voltage feeling that made the scene fresh and exciting in the first place.

Q: How many characters besides Darby are based on real people?

A: Fifty-four or fifty-five! I was shocked when we did the legal review and counted them up. But mostly those are cameo roles, minor characters doing minor things. Phranc is the major exception to that in the here-and-now of the book. Remember, it's six months after Darby died, so he just appears in flashbacks. The four main punk characters — Rockets, Siouxsie, Squid, Blitzler — are fictional. The other two main characters, Tim and David, aren't punks. They're based on two guys I knew even before I met Darby.

Q: Did they really drive a van filled with popcorn and cosmetics from Minnesota to the Coca-Cola Museum in Atlanta?

A: No, actually they drove farther, all the way from Oregon. I don't think I'm capable of making that up. I lack that kind of imagination.

Q: So what you're writing is what one reviewer called "semi-autobiographical," fiction based on fact?

A: Up to a point. I especially didn't want to misrepresent Darby Crash, so all the direct quotes attributed to him are things he's on the record saying, except when I inserted the narrator's name as one of the people he mentions to Rodney during an interview on KROQ. I was careful with others, too. Kickboy, for example. He's dead, so I could have written whatever I wanted, same as with Darby. But to me the story gains a lot of resonance from being grounded in real incidents in real places populated by real people. To a lot of kids just discovering the music and the history behind it, that era seems mythical already, so I don't see much point in piling on more. As for autobiography, it's definitely more autobiographical than *War Boy*. But at the end of the night it's still a made-up story. I'm not Rockets.

Q: What made you decide to write about that time?

A: A friend of mine from back in the day told me I should. It's that simple. It was Pat Gerkin, who fronted a band called the Jerkin' Gerkins. He'd read *War Boy* and wrote to say he liked it, but when was I going to write about the early L.A. punk scene? It wasn't till I was deep into writing the novel that I realized he'd said "when," not "if." Others had asked me before, but Pat was the first one who treated it as a foregone conclusion. In

hindsight that seems significant to me.

Q: The novel contrasts Darby Crash with Phranc in terms of their public self-identification as queer people and their success at influencing their audience. In the end, it's Phranc who rescues Rockets from the destructive influence of Darby. Did you plan that from the very beginning?

A: All I knew was that the book would end at dawn on the pier. And I knew the last line. So I knew that Rockets would make a choice, but the influences in making it are something that came out in the course of the writing. And Phranc doesn't actually rescue Rockets; he rescues himself. That's an important distinction. She could intervene more forcefully, but she's smart enough to show him she cares about him, instead of just telling him. She shows it by believing in him. And that's the best way there is.

Q: You can write freely about Darby by name because he's dead?

A: I don't think that has much to do with it. Darby was a public figure and the work is clearly labeled fiction. The story is actually set on one night a few months after he checked out, so everything with Darby in it takes the form of flashbacks in the minds of his friends. All the direct quotes I attribute to him are things he's on the record saying. It's not just Darby, either. I have Phranc at the Starwood, doing that song "Take Off Your Swastikas," just the way it went down. Cameos by all sorts of scenesters. Hellin Killer, Henley, Gerber, Donny Rose. Bands like the Skulls and the Screamers.

Q: On the subject of explanations, Darby Crash killed himself with a heroin overdose. One of your fictional characters says that a possible reason was that he liked boys and was afraid the hardcore macho kids from the beaches might come after him if word got out. Is that your theory?

A: I put that in because some people say that, but if you want a sexual explanation I think Gerber's is better. Because Darby didn't just like boys, he liked young boys. And she thinks he looked at this older chickenhawk guy we all knew named Tar, a real scumbag, and saw himself like that in another fifteen or twenty years, and it was just too depressing. It is true that Darby hated Tar. Absolutely. Pathologically. Memorably. But I personally think if anything's to blame, it's bad drugs and creepy company.

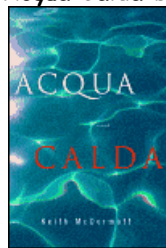
(Reprinted with permission, Thorn Kief Hillsbery)

The full interview, including comments on Hillsbery's first novel, *War Boy*, and about life after punk:

http://www.whatwedoissecret.com/thorn_qa1.html

.....

***Acqua Calda* by Keith McDermott (Carroll & Graf)**



From an interview by Patrick Giles:

The actor's life was the one for Keith McDermott. Having starred by his early twenties in Broadway's *Equus* opposite Richard Burton, he was unquestionably of the moment. "I was very ambitious. I had to be, to get the kind of roles I got," McDermott admits. The theater runs throughout *Acqua Calda*, his debut novel, in which a middle-aged actor suffering from AIDS finds renewal after he joins a theater production rehearsing in Sicily. McDermott's jump from stage to page is a combination of artistic progression and adjustment to a changing job market. "I'd always been a book junkie," he says, "and I was getting less acting work. Writing was a natural world to get into." During the mid-1970s, McDermott lived with author Edmund White, one of a few authors then breaking the culture's silence over gay stories and issues. It was an exciting moment for gays in New York City, and McDermott found himself at its epicenter. Years later the AIDS crisis would force him to take stock: "I was spending so much time at deathbeds that acting became a little less real for me." Yet the life he once led still fascinates him. "Actually, the level of honesty you need to bring to acting is the same one that writing demands," muses McDermott. "Although this book is very close to my life, I never for a minute thought I was writing anything but fiction."

Patrick Giles died last year, of cancer, a few months after this short interview/review appeared in May 2005. I met Patrick while he was working in the 1990s at A Different Light Bookstore in NYC/Chelsea, and when I'd come to town from San Francisco, where I ran ADL/SF, we'd spend hours chatting about books. He loved good writing, and I'm sorry he never wrote the novel he often talked about – he wrote so well about writers and writing, and for a big man was awfully nimble as he walked the New York store's aisles avidly handselling books he loved to customers who came to depend on his perceptive opinions.

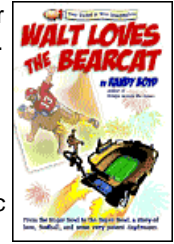
Friends from his many worlds – gay lit, opera, baseball, and more – wrote about him

lovingly in the weeks after his death, at a remembrance website, <http://www.auracentral.com>. Among those recalling his goodness is Kirk Read, author of *How I Learned to Snap*, who met Patrick at the bookstore.

.....

Walt Loves the Bearcat. And So Do I...

Back in December, **BTWOF** publisher Carol Seajay asked me to send her a favorite or two from 2005, for her **Lesbian Edition** year-end installment. In my medicated stupor, I forgot – duh – that she was asking about my favorite lesbian title (probably Ali Liebegott's *The Beautifully Worthless*). My wrong-gender choice was *Walt Loves the Bearcat*, by Randy Boyd (West Beach Books, \$24.95, paper), which is a Lammy finalist in the Romance category. Here's what I sent her:



"At 720 small-type pages, it's decidedly a reading commitment - an epic love story, written with (as I wrote in my review for Book Marks) 'a roller-coaster brio and a magical intensity that demand - and deserve - the reader's perseverance.' Boyd's three previous novels (*Uprising!*, *Bridge Across the Ocean*, *The Devil Inside*) all flirted with the pith of this one: yearning for one true love. In parallel stories that intertwine with energetic creativity, Boyd writes about a black college cheerleader who has grown up to be a writer, and who has fantasized for years about a golden-haired college quarterback whose picture he spotted in a game program; 21 years later, the black gay man and the twice-divorced straight man - his football career cut short by an injury - finally meet. In another universe, both are gay, the football career resumes after a spiritual healing, and the young men are in love for life - 'a madcap whirl, too good to be true but blessedly real.' Why do I like it so much? The plot is original, the writing is inventive, the romance is majestic, and the novel's structure is ferociously imaginative."

And here's an interview with Boyd, from his website, about how much of him is in the book...

"Randy Boyd has been a cheerleader, a football player, and a long-term AIDS survivor. Recently, he talked about how those life experiences shaped his latest novel, *Walt Loves the Bearcat*."

Q: You've said you survived AIDS for over 20 years in order to create this book. Can you elaborate?

A: In 1985, in the span of a few weeks, I graduated UCLA, developed night sweats, and Rock Hudson announced to the world he had AIDS, making those three little letters a household name. They hadn't even identified HIV, but the scientists on television knew night sweats were an early symptom. That's how I found out I had this deadly new disease. I was 23. Life expectancy was 12-18 months. There was no hope whatsoever.

I often ask myself: why am I still alive? Why me and why not the guy sitting next to me in the doctor's office 10 years ago, 15 years ago, 20 years ago? You can analyze it to death, literally, but it really boils down to being like a home spared in a tornado when most of the neighborhood is blown away. It's impossible to say definitively what has kept my body alive, but I do know the things that have kept my spirit alive. One of those is *Walt Loves the Bearcat*. For over 20 years, I've known I was going to write this book someday. As far as I can see, it's the reason I'm still here, to finally share my deepest dreams with the world.

Q: What are those deepest dreams?

A: Two beautiful boys, happily in love for eternity, having fun playing the games of life.

Q: Like you, the Marcus character is in his 40s, HIV-positive and a former UCLA cheerleader. Just how deep do the similarities go?

A: Oh, he's a whole other guy, just some handsome, studly black man I dreamt up (laughs). At the heart of *Walt Loves the Bearcat* is a lifelong romance between a college quarterback and cheerleader, so yeah, their whacky college adventures are definitely inspired by my days as a drunken rowdy frat boy cheerleader.

Q: What was fraternity life like for the drunken rowdy frat boy cheerleader?

A: I was the only black guy in a white frat. I played straight and assumed everybody played along. The first week I was a pledge, somebody relayed a joke about my dick size (without ever seeing my dick) and from then on, I was known as Tripod. Everything seemed to be about my Big Black Dick before anyone knew whether or not I even had one. And, no, that wasn't very fun (laughs).

Q: You played straight yet you were a college cheerleader?

A: Crazy, huh? In retrospect, why did I bother? There's a line in the book: At some point, 110% of the population will question your sexuality because you once were and always will be: a male cheerleader.

Q: Any real-life Walts for the real-life cheerleader?

A: No, but back in the day, there was one UCLA player I shared an unspoken attraction with, but then again, maybe it was all in my mind. If he's out there, I'd sure love to hear from him and get his take.

Q: This book has its share of whacky and fantastical adventures, from the “mascot stunt” that leads to the whole Bearcat phenomenon, to stadiums turning into aerial transports, to all kinds of twists and turns that can only be described as “cosmic.” Do you have a favorite shocking twist or magical occurrence?

A: Probably the very last football game or a certain spaceship blast off, but to say more would be giving away too much. And I love what's revealed near the end of a chapter called “Story Meeting,” but that's all I can say. Can you tell I'm a tease?

Q: *Walt Loves the Bearcat* deals extensively with the serious issues of race in society and homosexuality in sports, oftentimes within the context of the fantastical adventures. Was it your intention to mix the elements?

A: Isn't that the way life works? One minute you're enchanted by something mysterious, the next, you're perplexed by something beyond your grasp?

Q: The quarterback becomes the first superstar athlete to admit his love for another man while in the prime of his career, causing a mass reaction around the globe. Do you see that happening in this world anytime soon?

A: Will a superstar athlete come out anytime soon? Soon, as in the lifetime of many alive today, yes. Definitely. I hope *Walt Loves the Bearcat* helps light the way as an example of how not to focus on the worst-case scenario, rather, the best-case scenario. In life in general.

Q: Is that what you call *Dream the Better Dream* in the book?

A: Exactly. In the late 80s, I was at an AIDS information meeting and a speaker said something mostly unheard of in those days: “You're not guaranteed to die of AIDS.” The room lightened and lifted, as if he had instilled a new dream in all our minds, as if for the first time, we were given an alternative to dwelling on our worst nightmares. As one character in *Walt Loves the Bearcat* states: life doesn't have to be your worst dreams come true. Why not make life your best dreams come true? So much of the book is about the power of dreams and how that energy propels us forward or backwards in life, depending on which way you wanna go.

Q: There's also a surprising number of references to God in *Walt Loves the Bearcat*.

A: Surprising to whom? We seem to have this unspoken agreement in society that only certain types of people can express themselves when it comes to their belief in God. Last I checked, no one person or group had an exclusive on sharing what God means to them. This novel follows 21 years of life, and then some. That means the good, the bad, and the God. I wouldn't be true to the characters or myself, if I didn't talk about God.

Q: With character names like Reggie Snowman, Evil Announcer Guy, Black Coach, Hail Larry, and the ER Wife — not to mention some of the playful word games in the book — it's easy at times to picture the inner child at the author's keyboard.

A: Oh, yes. Sometimes I let the little black boy inside my soul have his run of the place and my keyboard. After all, *Walt Loves the Bearcat* is his deepest dream.

(©2005 by Randy Boyd)

.....

Processing the Lambda Literary Awards

As I mentioned at the top of this edition of **The Gay Men's Edition**, I've been involved in some form or other of the “finalist committee” of the Lambda Literary Awards almost from the beginning. That's the group that narrows several hundred nominees down to five finalists in each category. For several years, the process was conducted by mail: we sent our “top fives” to whoever at the *Lambda Book Report*/Lambda Literary Foundation was coordinating things, they added up numbers, and produced the finalists. Last year, for the first time, committee members “met” in conference calls for a vigorous back-and-forth, give-and-take, a system that introduced both accountability and “transparency” – that word – into the process; the same system was employed this year, though with fewer people taking part. I wrote about the very beginning (the 400 or so books that were nominated by publishers and others) and the very end (the list of finalists) of the process in the Lammy special edition of BTWOF that was distributed in February... to refresh your memories on both the “long list” of 400 nominees, and the finalists, go:

www.btwof.com/enews_extras/ImagesLammyNoms06/

[LammyNoms2006_HTML.html](#).

Here, I want to fill in the middle part: first, listed below are my “top fives” (and sometimes a couple more) in all but one of the categories. (I don’t rank books in Erotica, a category introduced several years ago, nor do I take part in the phone conferences, because I edit the *Best Gay Erotica* series for Cleis Press, with that obvious conflict.) After that comes the aggregated list of top five choices by the members of the committee (Carol Seajay, Cecilia Martin of Oscar Wilde Bookshop, Kris Kleindienst of Left Bank Books, Philip Rafshoon of Outwrite Bookstore, Michael Bronski, and myself).

Choosing just five books in many of the categories was no easy task, for me or for the other members of the finalist committee. There really are a lot of good books being published, and some wonderful books didn’t garner enough consensus to make the cut. Certainly not all of my particular choices for best books made it into the rank of finalists. The following listing is as I sent it to Charles Flowers, who coordinated the discussions but didn’t weigh in or vote. I’ve italicized the books I liked that became finalists, though some made it in categories other than where I listed them – as the discussion went on, it became obvious, for example, that Ali Liebegott’s *The Beautifully Worthless* was as much novel as poetry, and that there were far too many worthy nonfiction candidates than the single category of “LGBT Studies” could honor, which shifted the Dennis Altman book on Gore Vidal from Belles Lettres to Nonfiction, for example, and which put Kate Clinton’s *What the L* in humor....



My Top Fives and Some Likes...

ANTHOLOGY

Everything I Have is Blue (Ricketts); *Lesbian Pulp Fiction* (Forrest); *Fresh Men 2* (Weise); *Outside the Lines* (Hennessy); *Bullets & Butterflies* (Xavier)

BELLES LETTRES

American Ghosts (Plante); *Gore Vidal's America* (Altman); *My One-Night Stand With Cancer* (Noyes); *Quicksands* (Bedford); *Let's Shut Out the World* (Bentley)

But I'm also happy with...

Luncheonette (Sorrentino); *The Tricky Part* (Moran); *The Commitment* (Savage); *Nasty* (Doonan); *Attack of the Man-Eating Lotus Blossoms* (Chin); *Loose Ends* (Coyote)

...a rich category!

BIOGRAPHY

Wild Girls (Souhami); *February House* (Tippins); *The Fabulous Sylvester* (Gamson); *Nothing is True Everything is Permitted* (Geiger); *Edge of Midnight* (Mann)

CHILDREN / YOUNG ADULT

A Really Nice Prom Mess (Sloan); *And Tango Makes Three* (Parnell & Richardson); *Totally Joe* (Howe); *The Order of the Poison Oak* (Harteringer); *Absolutely Positively Not* (La Rochelle)

DEBUT FICTION / Gay

The First Verse (McCrae); *Mother of Sorrows* (McCann); *You Are Not the One* (McIntyre); *Choir Boy* (Anders); *Setting the Lawn on Fire* (Friedman)

DEBUT FICTION / Lesbian

Crashing America (Noyes); *Clearcut* (Shengold); *In Too Deep* (Black)

Of the rest I've read, not a one impressed me much...

EROTICA – no vote, obviously, but...

Six Positions (Quan), *Tangled Sheets* (Ford), *Boy in the Middle* (Califia), *Out of Control* (Wharton & Phillips), and *Rode Hard, Put Away Wet* (Green & Valencia) are really good, in that order...

GAY FICTION

The Sluts (Cooper); *Faith for Beginners* (Hamburger); *What We Do is Secret* (Hillsbery); *Back Where He Started* (Quinn); *They Change the Subject* (Martin)

...but I'm just as happy with 'You Can Say You Knew Me When' (Soehnlein) or 'How's Your Romance?' (Mordden)

LESBIAN FICTION

The Woman Who Loved War (Brownrigg); *Babyji* (Dawesa); *With or Without You* (Sanders); *Lighthousekeeping* (Winterson); *Wild Dogs* (Humphreys)

'Above the Thunder' (Manfredi) I like a lot, but the queer characters are guys; 'Loose End' (Coyote) I like a lot, but I think it's nonfiction.

HUMOR

Invasion of the Dykes to Watch Out For (Bechdel); *The Underminer* (Albo & Heffernan); *Gay Haiku* (Derfner); *Juicy Mother* (Camper); *Revenge of the Paste Eater* (Peck)

I think '101 Must-See Movies for Gay Men' (Duralde) could fit in here... and certainly *What the L!* (Clinton)

LGBT NONFICTION

Why I Hate Abercrombie & Fitch (McBride); *Queer Wars* (Robinson); *Words To Our Now* (Glave); *Love's Rites* (Vanita); *Turn the Beat Around* (Shapiro)

MYSTERY / Gay

One of These Things Is Not Like the Others (Scott); *The Paper Mirror* (Grey); *The Actor's Guide to Greed* (Copp); *Tapas on the Ramblas* (Bidulka); *Light Before Day* (Rice)

MYSTERY / Lesbian

The Iron Girl (Hart); *Women of Mystery* (Forrest); *Have Gun We'll Travel* (Lake); *Son of a Gun* (Lordon); *Justice Served* (Radclyffe)

POETRY / Gay

Crush (Siken); *Stardust* (Bidart); *Directions to the Beach of the Dead* (Bianco); *For Dust Thou Art* (Liu); *Sugar* (Pousson)

POETRY / Lesbian

The Beautifully Worthless (Liebegott); *Rapture* (Duffy); *Where the Apple Falls* (Bashir); *Life Mask* (Kay); *Directed by Desire* (Jordan)

ROMANCE

Just Like That (Kallmaker); *Walt Loves the Bearcat* (Boyd); *Force of Nature* (Baldwin); *Tides of Passion* (Braund); *The Price of Temptation* (Pearon)

'Third & Heaven' (Johnson) and 'Hot Sauce' (Pomfret & Whittier) from gay fiction and 'Scrub Match' (Eisele) and 'The Unborn Spouse Situation' (Rauscher) from debut gay fiction are all romancey, though their publishers nominated them elsewhere...

SF / HORROR / FANTASY

Daughters of an Emerald Dusk (Forrest); *The Temple at Landfall* (Fletcher); *Shapers of Darkness* (Coe); *No Sister of Mine* (G'Fellers); *Protector of the Treader* (Brooke)

SPIRITUALITY

The Path of the Green Man (Ford); *Fumbling Towards Divinity* (Hickman); *Que(e)rying Evangelism* (diNovo); *I Am This One Walking Beside Me: Meditations of an HIV Positive Gay Man* (Gephardt); *The Seven Sisters of the Pleiades* (Andrews)

TRANSGENDER

Choirboy (Anders); *Just Add Hormones* (Kailey); *The Riddle of Gender* (Radacille); *In a Queer Time and Place* (Halberstam); *Alice in Genderland* (Novic)

Those are the books I liked, though I'm still second-guessing myself. In gay fiction/gay debut alone, I liked Bart Yates' *The Bishop Boys*. I liked *The Wild Creatures: Stories* by Sam D'Allesandro, edited by Kevin Killian. I liked *With Angels and Furies*, by John Sam Jones. I liked *How to Name a Hurricane*, by Rane Arroyo. I liked *A Year of Two Summers*, by Shaun Levin. I liked *Three Fortunes in One Cookie*, by Cochrane Lambert. I liked *The Unborn Spouse Situation*, by Matt Rauscher...all for different reasons, and with different audiences in mind.

**The Top Fives, Compiled Edition**

When it came to choosing the finalists, we worked with the compilation, listed below, of 'top fives' from the finalist committee members; in addition, though not folded into that list, we had on hand suggestions and thoughtful opinions from three outside specialists: Susan Stryker for Transgender, Drewey Wayne Gunn (*The Gay Male Sleuth in Print and Film*, Scarecrow, 2005) for Gay Men's Mystery, and Nan Cinnater for Lesbian Mystery – a system that worked really well, and which I imagine will be expanded next year, coupling the overview of a panel of booksellers and reviewers with the specific insights of individuals who really know a given book category.

That's one reason the "top five" in the compiled list weren't automatically the five finalists in each category. The other, primary, reason is that the six of us, like any good awards committee, argued thoughtfully towards consensus. We didn't ever agree from the

start, but the end result was achieved thoughtfully and with respect for each other. Really.

So, for the record: here's the list (raw, in the form it was distributed to the Finalist Committee) that was the basis for more than six hours of phone conferences over two days, out of which came the 2005 Lambda Literary Award Finalists. That's how the sausage was made – and it's pretty fine sausage... and, as you read this, more than 70 judges are choosing the winners in each of the 20 categories.

Lammy 2006 Finalist Process, as of February 25, 2006

Anthology

4	Bullets and Butterflies	ed. Xavier
4	Lesbian Pulp Fiction	ed. Forrest
3	Everything I Have is Blue	ed. Ricketts
3	Fresh Men 2	ed. Holleran, Weise
2	Red Light	ed. Camilleri
2	Queer Stories for Boys	ed. McKeown
1	52 Pickup	ed. Morris
1	Hitched	ed. Dumesnil
1	Outside the Lines	Hennessey
1	Women of Mystery	ed. Forrest
1	Lesbian Communities	Rothblum, Sablove
1	Ultimate Gay Erotica 2006	ed. Grant
1	Ultimate Lesbian Erotica 2006	ed. Foster

Belles Lettres

3	The Tricky Part	Martin Moran
3	Quicksands: A Memoir	Sybille Bedford
3	Tab Hunter Confidential	Tab Hunter
2	My One Night Stand with Cancer	Tania Katan
2	The Commitment	Dan Savage
2	Nasty	Simon Doonan
2	Luncheonette	Stephen Sorrentino
1	Gentleman Callers	Michael Paller
1	Diary of a Drag Queen	Daniel Harris
1	American Ghosts	David Plante
1	Gore Vidal's America	Dennis Altman
1	Attack of the Man-Eating Lotus	Justin Chin
1	Let's Shut Out the World	Kevin Bentley
1	Wild Girls (if not Bio)	Diane Souhami
1	Things No Longer There	Susan Krieger (if not Bio)
1	Beyond Recall: Mary Meigs	ed. Lise Weil (if not Bio)
1	Breakfast with Tiffany	Ed Wintle
1	When I Knew	Trachtenberg
1	Stretching My Mind	Edward Albee

Biography

5	February House	Sherrill Tippins
4	The Fabulous Sylvester	Joshua Gamson
2	Wild Girls (if not BL)	Diane Souhami
2	Superstar in a Housedress	Craig Highberger
2	The Man Who Invented Rock Hudson	Bob Hofer
1	Things No Longer There	Susan Krieger (if not Bio)
1	Beyond Recall: Mary Meigs	ed. Lise Weil (if not Bio)
1	Quicksands (if not BL)	Sybille Bedford
1	Center Square (Paul Lynde)	Wilson & Florenski
1	Tales from the Levee (fiction, but submitted in Biography)	
1	Gay and Lesbian Theatrical Legacy	ed. Billy J. Harbin, Kim Marra
1	The Man Who Knew Too Much	David Leavitt
1	Nothing is True, Everything is Permitted	John Geiger
1	Edge of Midnight (Schlesinger)	William J. Mann
1	Katherine Hepburn	Robert James Parish

Children/Young Adult (Bronski-no selections)

4	And Tango Makes Three	Richardson & Parnell
3	Totally Joe	James Howe
3	Rainbow Road	Alex Sanchez
2	A Really Nice Prom Mess	Brian Sloan
2	Order of the Poison Oak	Brent Hartinger
1	Antonio's Card/La Tarjeta de Antonio	Rigoberto Gonzalez
1	Absolutely Positively Not	David La Rochelle
1	Manstealing for Fat Girls	Michelle Embree

1 Swimming in the Monsoon Sea Shyam Selvadurai
 1 You're Different & That's Super Carson Kressley

Debut Fiction (Gay)

4 Choir Boy
 4 Setting the Lawn on Fire
 3 Mother of Sorrows
 2 The First Verse
 2 You are Not the One
 2 Boys in the Brownstone
 1 Late and Soon
 1 Deliver me from Nowhere
 1 Bilal's Bread
 1 Potato Queen
 1 Down for Whatever
 1 A Really Nice Prom Mess

Debut Fiction (Lesbian) (Bronski, Rafshoon-no selections)

3 Crashing America
 2 Manstealing for Fat Girls
 2 Clearcut
 1 In Too Deep
 1 The Next World
 1 Bliss

Erotica (Labonte-no selections)

3 Best Gay Erotica 2006
 3 Best Lesbian Erotica 2006
 3 Rode Hard Put Away Wet
 2 Bliss
 2 Close Contact
 2 With a Rough Tongue
 1 Boy in the Middle
 1 Erotic Interludes 2
 1 Six Positions
 1 Tangled Sheets
 1 Hot Lesbian Erotica

Fiction (Gay) (Seajay-no selections)

3 The Sluts
 2 Faith for Beginners
 2 Acqua Calda
 2 All American Boy
 1 How's Your Romance?
 1 Wild Creatures
 1 German Officer's Boy
 1 House is Not a Home
 1 You Can Say You Knew Me When
 1 What We Do is Secret
 1 Back Where He Started
 1 They Change the Subject
 1 Mother of Sorrows
 1 Sex Camp

Fiction (Lesbian)

4 Lighthousekeeping
 4 Babyji
 2 Celebrating Hotchclaw
 2 With or Without You
 2 The Woman Who Loved War
 2 Beautiful Inez
 1 Wild Dogs
 1 Gotta Find Me an Angel
 1 Five Books of Moses Lapinsky
 1 Daughters of an Emerald Dusk
 1 Loose End

Humor

5 Invasion of Dykes to Watch Out For Bechdel
 4 Revenge of the Paste Eaters Cheryl Peck
 3 Juicy Mother Camper

3	What the L ? (pub put in Nonfiction)	Kate Clinton
3	Don't Get too Comfortable	David Rakoff
3	The Underminer	Mike Albo
2	Gay Haiku	Joel Derfner
1	Legend of Bushistotle	Steven Hanley

Nonfiction

3	What the L? (Humor?)	Kate Clinton
2	Why I Hate Abercrombie and Fitch	Dwight A. McBride
2	Black Queer Studies	Johnson & Henderson
2	Blessing Same Sex Unions	Mark Jordan
2	Love's Rite (India)	Ruth Vanita
2	Harvard's Secret Court	William Wright
2	Beyond the Down Low	Keith Boykin
1	Impossible Desires	Gayatri Gopinath
1	Zest for Life (Lesbian Menopause)	Jennifer Kelly
1	Raising Boys without Men	Peggy Drexler
1	Women Together/Women Apart	Tirza True Latimer
1	Sodom on the Thames	Morris Kaplan
1	Business, Not Politics	Katherine Sender
1	Tweakers (Crystal Meth)	Frank Sanello
1	The Velvet Rage	Alan Downs
1	Queer Wars	Paul Robinson
1	Words to Our Now (essays)	Thomas Glave
1	Turn the Beat Around (Disco History)	Peter Shapiro
1	Queer London	Matt Houlbrook
1	101 Movies	Alonso Duralde

Mystery (Gay) (Seajay-no selections)

3	One of These Things is Not like the Others
3	Light Before Day
3	Actors Guide to Greed
2	Desert Summer
2	Tapas on the Ramblas
2	Paper Mirror
1	Scene Stealer
1	Mahu
1	Deadline

Mystery (Lesbian) (Bronski-no selections)

3	Women of Mystery
3	Iron Girl
3	Justice Served
2	Hostage to Murder
2	Son of a Gun
1	Desert Blood
1	Darkness Descending
1	Grave Silence
1	Mouth of Babes
1	Have Gun We'll Travel
1	Kookaburra Gambit
1	Finding Mrs. Wright
1	Hunter's Way
1	In Too Deep

Poetry (Gay)

4	For Dust Thou Art
3	School of the Arts
3	Stardust
2	Sugar
2	Crush
1	Love Life
1	After Hours
1	The Insatiable Palm
1	Bullets & Butterflies (also in Anthology)
1	PIZZA
1	Directions to the Beach . . .
1	Book of Faces

Poetry (Lesbian)

5	Directed by Desire	June Jordan
---	--------------------	-------------

4	New and Selected Vol. 2	Mary Oliver
3	Where the Apple Falls	Samiya Bashir
3	Life Mask	Jackie Kay
3	Rapture	Carol Ann Duffy
2	The Beautifully Worthless	Ali Liebegott
2	Jane: A Murder	
1	Queer Street	
1	Watercolor Women/Opaque Men	Ana Castillo
1	Collected Poems Djuna Barnes	
1	Eye of Water	Amber Flora Lewis

Romance (Bronski-no selections)

3	Tides of Passion	Diana Braund
3	Artist's Dream	Gerri Hill
3	Just Like That	Karin Kallmaker
2	Price of Temptation	M.J.Pearson
2	Midnight Rain	Peggy Herring
2	Walt Loves the Bearcat	Randy Boyd
2	Distant Shores, Silent Thunder	Radclyffe
2	Honor Reclaimed	Radclyffe
2	Force of Nature	Kim Baldwin
1	Poppy's Return	Pat Rosier
1	Millionaire of Love	David Leddick

SF / Horror / Fantasy

3	Temple Landfall	Jane Fletcher
2	Daughters of an Emerald Dusk	Katherine Forrest
2	Fledgling	Octavia Butler
2	Shapers of Darkness	David Coe
2	No Sister of Mine	ed. Bella Books
2	Walt Loves the Bearcat	Randy Boyd
2	Walls of Westernfort	Jane Fletcher
2	Protector of the Treader	Gun Brooke
1	One of These Things Is Not Like...	D. Travers Scott

Spirituality (Seajay-no selections)

3	Qu(e)ring Evangelism	Cheri DiNovo
3	Path of the Green Man	Michael Thomas Ford
2	Fumbling Toward Divinity	Craig Hickman
2	I Am the One Walking Beside Me	Daniel Gebhardt
1	Talking About Homosexuality	Oliveto, Turney, & West
1	When Heroes Love	Susan Ackerman
1	For Another Flock	Jeffrey Lea
1	Seven Sisters of the Pleiades	Munya Andrews

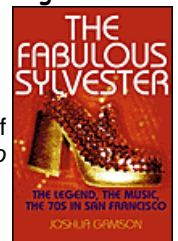
Transgender

4	Just Add Hormones	Matt Kailey
3	In a Queer Time and Place	Judith Halberstam
3	Choir Boy	Charlie Anders
3	Deliver Me from Nowhere	Tennessee Jones
2	The Riddle of Gender	Deborah Rudacille
2	Boy in the Middle	Patrick Califia
1	Ladies or Gentlemen	Jean-Louis Ginibre
1	Alice in Genderland	Richard Novic

.....

The Queer Awards Season Is Upon Us: The ALA and Publishing Triangle Awards

The queer awards season started back in January, when the American Library Association Stonewall Book Committee announced its winners (though the awards, now in their 35th year, won't be presented until June): Abha Dawesar, author of *Babyji* (Anchor Books), receives the Barbara Gittings Book Award in Literature, and Joshua Gamson, author of *The Fabulous Sylvester: the Legend, the Music, the '70s in San Francisco* (Henry Holt and Co.), receives the Israel Fishman Book Award for Nonfiction.



The 2006 Stonewall honor books (that is to say, the runners-up) in literature are:

- *Acqua Calda* by Keith McDermott (Carroll & Graf)
- *The First Verse* by Barry McCrea (Carroll & Graf)

- *Mother of Sorrows* by Richard McCann (Pantheon)
- *The Wild Creatures: Collected Stories of Sam D'Allesandro* edited by Kevin Killian (Suspect Thoughts)

And the 2006 Stonewall honor books in nonfiction are:

- *My One Night Stand with Cancer* by Tania Katan (Alyson)
- *Queer London: Perils and Pleasures in the Sexual Metropolis, 1918-1957* by Matt Houlbrook (Univ. of Chicago)
- *The Secret Life of Oscar Wilde* by Neil McKenna (Basic Books)
- *The Tragedy of Today's Gays* by Larry Kramer (Tarcher/Penguin)

The two ALA winners are both Lammy finalists, as are three of the four ALA fiction runners-up (*The Wild Creatures* didn't make the Lammy list) and one of the ALA nonfiction finalists (*My One-Night Stand With Cancer* made the Lammy list).

And the finalists in the Publishing Triangle's nonfiction, fiction, and poetry categories, announced March 24, are:

The Randy Shilts Award for Gay Nonfiction

Thomas Glave, *Words to Our Now* (University of Minnesota Press)
 Neil McKenna, *The Secret Life of Oscar Wilde* (Basic Books)
 Martin Moran, *The Tricky Part* (Beacon Press)

The Judy Grahn Award for Lesbian Nonfiction

Tania Katan, *My One-Night Stand with Cancer* (Alyson Books)
 Gretchen Legler, *On the Ice* (Milkweed Editions)
 Diana Souhami, *Wild Girls* (St. Martin's Press)

The Thom Gunn Award for Gay Male Poetry

Frank Bidart, *Star Dust* (Farrar Straus Giroux)
 Peter Covino, *Cut Off the Ears of Winter* (New Issues)
 Richard Siken, *Crush* (Yale University Press)

The Audre Lorde Award for Lesbian Poetry

Djuna Barnes, *Collected Poems with Notes Toward the Memoirs* (University of Wisconsin Press)
 June Jordan, *Directed by Desire* (Copper Canyon)
 Jane Miller, *A Palace of Pearls* (Copper Canyon)

The Ferro-Grumley Award for Fiction: Women

Brenda Brooks, *Gotta Find Me an Angel* (Raincoast Books)
 Ivan E. Coyote, *Loose End* (Arsenal Pulp Press)
 Patricia Grossman, *Brian in Three Seasons* (Permanent Press)

The Ferro-Grumley Awards for Fiction: Men

Darren Greer, *Still Life With June* (Cormorant Books)
 Barry McCrea, *The First Verse* (Carroll & Graf)
 Douglas A. Martin, *Branwell* (Soft Skull Press)

The Edmund White Award for Debut Fiction

Charlie Anders, *Choir Boy* (Soft Skull Press)
 Mack Friedman, *Setting the Lawn on Fire* (University of Wisconsin Press)
 Katia Noyes, *Crashing America* (Alyson Books)

Again, some overlap with the Lammys – Noyes, Friedman, and Anders for debut fiction, McCrea in the gay fiction category, Jordan in lesbian poetry, Siken in gay poetry, and Souhami and Noyes – and, again, many differences. Which is not a bad thing – there are enough good books to go around. More than 100 titles were nominated for the assorted PT prizes, which will be passed out Thursday, May 11, 2006, at the New School University in New York City. For information on the ceremony – the organization's 17th, and on how the Triangle's fundraising for an awards endowment is doing:

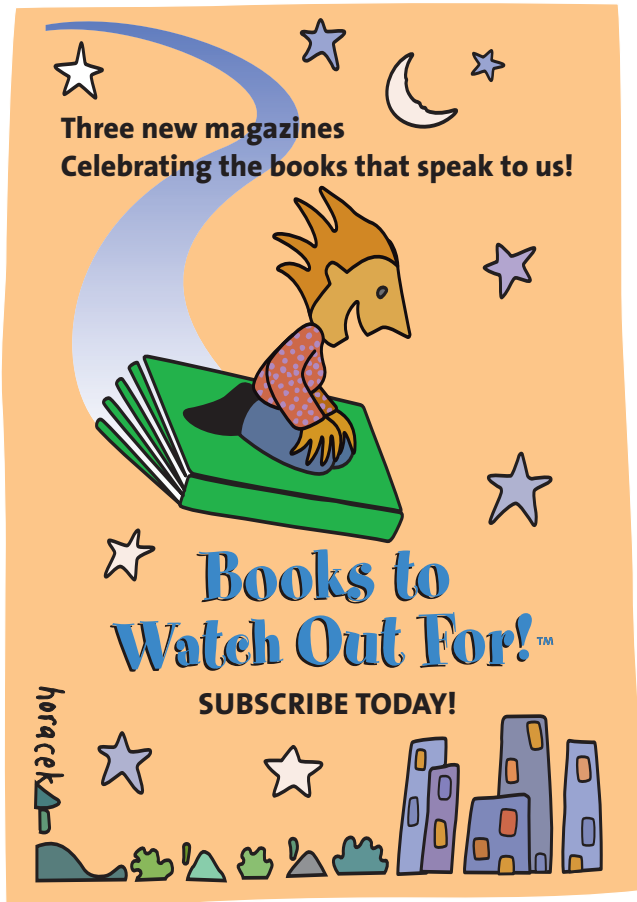
www.publishingtriangle.org.



Richard can be reached at tattyhill@gmail.com, at 613.264.5409, or at 7-A Drummond St W, Perth, ON K7H 2J3 Canada. Books for review, author news, interesting links — all appreciated.



© 2006 Books to Watch Out For
Graphics © [Judy Horacek](#)



Free Trial Subscriptions!

- ★ More Books for Women — just launched!
- ★ The Gay Men's Edition ★ The Lesbian Edition

Books to Watch Out For™ magazines help you get a handle on the best new GLBTQ and women's books.

Each edition of **Books to Watch Out For™** features succinct reviews of literary fiction, non-fiction, kids' books, mysteries and more, with the latest news from the book world compiled by Carol Seajay, Women & Children First bookstore, and Richard Labonte. Available monthly via email or post.

"A wonderful resource, and so much fun to read."

— Alison Bechdel



Sign up now for a free three-month trial subscription to Books To Watch Out For at www.BTWOF.com/TRIAL/.

The perfect gift for all your reading friends

www.BooksToWatchOutFor.com

★ The perfect gift for all your reading friends — and yourself!

★ Sign up for your free trial subscription!

Go to www.BTWOF.com/TRIAL/ and select the edition(s) you'd like.

★ Subscribe today! Sign up for our limited time offer — 15 months for the price of 12—

Go to www.BTWOF.com or use this form.

- More Books for Women The Lesbian Edition
 The Gay Men's Edition

email print

Name _____

Address _____

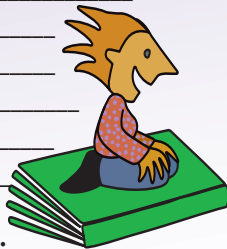
City _____ State/Prov _____

Zip/Postal Code _____ Country _____

Phone _____

Email address (required for email delivery) _____

Where did you hear about us? _____



Mail with check or credit card information to:

Books To Watch Out For

PO Box 882554, San Francisco CA 94188 415-642-9993

www.BooksToWatchOutFor.com

★ Give a friend 15 months for the price of 12.

- More Books for Women The Lesbian Edition
 The Gay Men's Edition

email print

Name _____

Address _____

City _____ State/Prov _____

Zip/Postal Code _____ Country _____

Phone _____

Email address (required for email delivery) _____

(Write additional gift recipients on a separate sheet of paper.)

Payment

___ One edition: email \$30/year print \$42/year

___ Two editions: email \$48/year print \$66/year

___ Three editions: email \$65/year print \$95/year

Check enclosed for \$ _____ Charge my credit card

Credit Card number _____

Exp. month _____ Exp. year _____ CVN _____

(CVN is the 3 digit number on back of some cards)

Name on card if different _____

Signature _____