

Best Sellers

August 1995

Glamorous Lesbians rule the women's top ten this month. A biography of singer k.d. lang holds the number two ranking. Books on the secret loves of Hollywood women and femme Lesbians round out the women's list this month.

The Funny Gay Males snare the number one spot on the men's list from Felice Picano. Daniel Helminiak's *What the Bible Really Says About Gays*, bolstered by strong sales in smaller cities, edges onto the list at number 10.

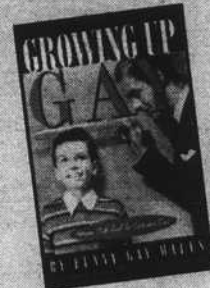
Women's Books

1. [1] *My Sweet Untraceable You*, by Sandra Scoppettone (Ballantine, mass market paperback, \$5.99). PI Lauren Laurano digs for clues in the theater world to a 35-year-old murder case.
2. [-] *k.d. lang*, by Victoria Starr (St. Martin's, paperback, \$5.50). The musician's biography with pictures.
3. [-] *Total Zone*, by Martina Navratilova and Liz Nickels (Ballantine, paperback, \$6.99). A retired professional tennis player becomes a detective when a teenage tennis star vanishes.
4. [-] *Flashpoint*, by Katherine V. Forrest (Naiad, \$10.95, trade paperback). A highly-connected Lesbian activist summons three friends on the eve of an important political decision in California.
5. [-] *Femme Mystique*, ed. by Leslea Newman (Alyson, \$11.95). Poetry, short fiction, essays, and photography by lipstick and lingerie-loving Lesbians.
6. [2] *And Say Hi To Joyce*, by Deb Price and Joyce Murdoch (Doubleday, clothbound, \$23.95). First 20 months of Deb Price's syndicated column, letters from readers, and "lovelove" Murdoch's recollections of how it all began.
7. [-] *The Intersection of Law and Desire*, by J.M. Redmann (Norton, clothbound, \$22). Lesbian detective Mickey Knight takes on the case of Cissy, the daughter of a friend who is believed to be sexually abused. As she battles a bunch of seedy thugs, Mickey confronts her own sexual abuse as a child.
8. [-] *Sewing Circle* (Birch Lane Press, clothbound, \$19.95). The hidden lives and loves of Hollywood women, including Marlene Dietrich, Greta Garbo, Katharine Cornell, and Barbara Stanwyck.
9. [-] *Tasting Life Twice* ed. by E.J. Levy (Avon Books, trade paperback, \$10). Literary-Lesbian fiction by new American authors.
10. [-] *Go Fish*, by Guinivere Turner and Rose Trouche. (Overlook, trade paperback, \$15.95). The screenplay of the 1994 surprise hit with interviews and pictures.



Men's Books

1. [2] *Growing Up Gay*, by Funny Gay Males (Hyperion, trade paperback, \$9.95). Tongue-in-cheek observations on Gay male childhood.
2. [1] *Like People in History*, by Felice Picano (Viking, clothbound, \$23.95). A novel of Gay life from Woodstock to the war on AIDS.
3. [3] *The Unofficial Gay Manual*, by Kevin DiLallo and Jack Krumholtz (Doubleday, trade paperback, \$12.50). How to be a stereotype on \$100,000 a year.
4. [-] *My First Time*, ed. by Jack Hart (Alyson, trade paperback, \$9.95). Gay men from around the nation describe their first same-sex experiences.
5. [4] *Lettin' It All Hang Out*, by RuPaul (Hyperion, clothbound, \$19.95). The autobiography of the Supermodel of the World.
6. [5] *Absolutely Fabulous*, by Jennifer Saunders (Pocket, trade paperback, \$12). The tie-in to the wildly popular television series.
7. [-] *Memnock the Devil: The Vampire Chronicles*, by Anne Rice (Knopf, hardcover, \$25). The Vampire Lestat confronts both God and the devil when he searches for the beautiful daughter of a New York drug lord.
8. [-] *Skinned Alive*, by Edmund White (Knopf, hardcover, \$23). Eight short stories explore the workings of desire in youth and later in life.
9. [-] *Flesh and the Word*, 3 ed. by John Preston (Plume/Penguin, trade paperback, \$13.95). Thirty-one homoerotic stories, including confessionals, travelogues, and dirty stories.
10. [-] *What the Bible Really Says About Gays*, by Daniel Helminiak (Alamo Square Press, \$9.95). Top scholars show those who perceive Bible verses as condemning homosexuality are being misled by faulty translations and poor interpretations.



Numbers in [brackets] indicate last month's ranking. A dash (-) means the book was not included in last month's list.

This month's best sellers list reflects the best-selling books at the following stores: Category Six Books (Denver); Common Language (Ann Arbor, Mich.); A Different Light (San Francisco); Lambda Rising (Washington, D.C./Baltimore/Rehoboth Beach, Del.); Lammas Women's Books and More (D.C./Baltimore); New Words (Cambridge, Mass.); Obelisk (San Diego, Calif.); An Open Book (Columbus, Ohio); Outwrite Bookstore and Coffeehouse (Atlanta); People Like Us (Chicago); St. Elmo's Books and Music (Pittsburgh); White Rabbit Books (Greensboro, Charlotte, and Raleigh, N.C.) and Unabridged (Chicago).

—Sheila Walsh

Grimsley's Gothic Dream Boy

Dream Boy; by Jim Grimsley; Algonquin; 195 pages; \$18.95

By Charles Roule

Jim Grimsley wields foreshadowing like a sledgehammer. In his second novel *Dream Boy*, Grimsley drops hints from the beginning. So, each event in the lives of high school lovers Nathan and Roy is both shocking and familiar. Grimsley's second novel is (basically) a coming of age story reminiscent of Edmund White's *A Boy's Own Story* or John Fox's *Boys on the Rock*. Grimsley adds an uncanny twist to the tale with his constant references to "Down East" North Carolina religion and prophecy.

I want to call Grimsley's tone post-modern gothic. He uses constant references to local ghost stories. And, similar to David's Lynch cult-classic movie *Blue Velvet* (which takes place in Lumberton, NC), it's difficult to pinpoint when the story takes place.

I suspect this technique is used partly to give the story universality. Grimsley also reminds us how rural America clings to its roots, and how little things change in small towns.

The story centers around Nathan, a boy in the eighth grade, who is befriended by his next door neighbor Roy Connelly. Nathan and his family move to Potter's lake. Nathan's father quotes the Bible, drinks too much whiskey, and sexually abuses his son. Nathan's mother tries to fade into the background.

Roy is a popular senior in high school, drives a school bus, drinks and smokes with his buddies, and has a girlfriend at another school. Roy and Nathan get to know each other over the pretense of doing homework. The rest of their relationship is typical boy meets boy ("You can't tell anybody about this...").

Then things take a turn for the abstract. Grimsley paces the story efficiently and concisely. When Grimsley concentrates on details, they are illusory. Neither Nathan's and Roy's love, nor Roy's friend Burke's suspicions are concrete. *Dream Boy* is total fantasy. That in mind, it's easy to overlook a couple of loose ends.

For instance, Nathan's infatuation with Roy is easily understood. Nathan obsesses over every touch or nearness from Roy. So why is Roy so head over heels for Nathan? Or why does Roy go from being chummy with Nathan, then sullen and jealous in three pages?

Grimsley also paints Burke as being unaware of Nathan during lunch in the cafeteria. So how does he come to suspect what Roy and Nathan are up to?

Roy, Nathan, Burke, and their friend Randy, go a camping trip to visit the an haunted plantation. Roy leads them through the woods, spinning ghost stories. Burke glares at Nathan over a whiskey bottle. Randy sings hymns. Nathan stays close to Roy (but not too close). See what I mean? Hint. Hint. Hint.

Grimsley makes the climactic exploration of the haunted house terrifying because you know what's going to happen. Or do you? Grimsley invents his own meta-fantasy; the tale flirts with gothic, romance, coming-of-age, and horror.

Dream Boy picks up flourishes of those genres, yet remains it's own story, with the strangest denouement I've ever read.

Dream Boy was an enjoyable, and (at times) chilling page-turner. I liked it in spite of myself. And I liked it in spite of it's plotwholes. If you want to indulge yourself in the uncanny this Fall pick up *Dream Boy*.



How Far We Have (Not) Come

Out Of The Past: Gay And Lesbian History From 1869 To The Present by Neil Miller; Vintage Books; 660 pages; \$16.00.

By Jesse Monteagudo

In 1976, when the first historical surveys of homosexuality appeared—*Gay American History* by Jonathan Katz and *Sexual Variance In Society And History* by Vern L. Bullough—homophile studies were still in their infancy. Two decades later, lesbian and gay scholarship has developed to such an extent that an overall history seem presumptuous.

Still, there is always a place for a all-encompassing study that would draw from the scholarship of others, both for the general reader and for use in gay studies courses. If this introductory survey is written by a man who knows his subject, has studied the material, and knows how to put his ideas across, then so much the better. Such is the case with *Out Of The Past*, Neil Miller's survey of modern queer history.

Miller makes his task easier by starting his survey in 1869, the year when the Hungarian Karl Maria Kertbeny garbled his Greek and his Latin to coin the word, "homosexuality." Before that time, we are told, there were same-sex acts but no same-sex identity. Only in the late nineteenth century were people divided into the neat categories of homosexual and heterosexual. Thus it seems odd that Miller should begin his study with Walt Whitman who, for all his attraction to young men, did not see himself as being "homosexual" in the modern sense.

Though not a professional historian, Miller exercised judgment in his selection of the existing literature as source material for *Out Of The Past*. Miller is at his best when he allows his subjects to speak for themselves, as he does in his lengthy excerpts from the works of Oscar Wilde, Andre Gide, Virginia Woolf, Radclyffe Hall, Audre Lorde and other writers.

More often, Miller rushes through his subject at a very

fast pace, as in his two-few pages about homosexuality in the Wild and Woolly West. A chapter on "Romantic Friendships Between Women"—which, like every other chapter, needs a book of its own to do it justice—runs the gamut from Willa Cather to Eleanor Roosevelt to the cross-dressing "Murray Hall". At worst, *Out Of The Past* is superficial. At best, it encourages the reader to further study.

We must cut Miller some slack, for he covers a wide field. *Out Of The Past* shines with unexpected gems. One of these, a 1960 report on a bar raid in Miami, first published in *One* magazine, should be read by those who take our foam parties and mega-discos for granted. Another tidbit, a lengthy excerpt from Carl Wittman's "Gay Manifesto", though written in 1969, reminds us of how far we haven't gone.

Though gay American history makes up most of *Out Of The Past*, a section on the "International Scene" covers the gamut from Cuba to Argentina to Great Britain to South Africa, which proves that homophobia is not limited to a particular ideology. On the other hand, the liberal democracies of Western Europe, where the rights of gay people are most advanced, are given short shrift.

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