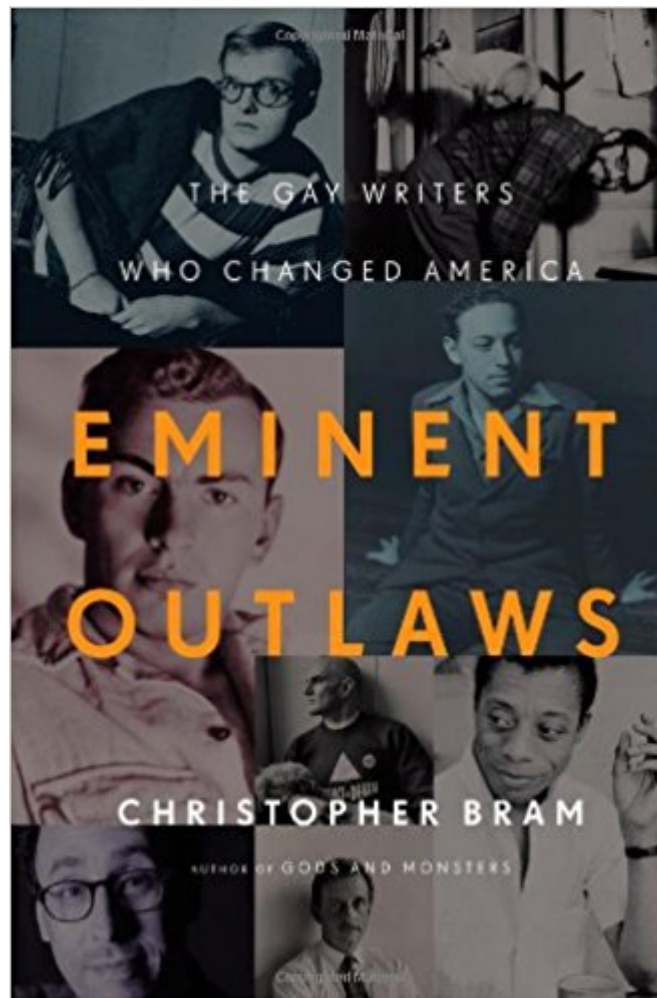




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# Eminent Outlaws: The Gay Writers Who Changed America



## Synopsis

"Fascinating...fun to read and will be the standard text of the defining era of gay literati." -

Philadelphia Inquirer  
In the years following World War II a group of gay writers established themselves as major cultural figures in American life. Truman Capote, the enfant terrible, whose finely wrought fiction and nonfiction captured the nation's imagination. Gore Vidal, the wry, withering chronicler of politics, sex, and history. Tennessee Williams, whose powerful plays rocketed him to the top of the American theater. James Baldwin, the harrowingly perceptive novelist and social critic. Christopher Isherwood, the English novelist who became a thoroughly American novelist. And the exuberant Allen Ginsberg, whose poetry defied censorship and exploded minds. Together, their writing introduced America to gay experience and sensibility, and changed our literary culture. But the change was only beginning. A new generation of gay writers followed, taking more risks and writing about their sexuality more openly. Edward Albee brought his prickly iconoclasm to the American theater. Edmund White laid bare his own life in stylized, autobiographical works. Armistead Maupin wove a rich tapestry of the counterculture, queer and straight. Mart Crowley brought gay men's lives out of the closet and onto the stage. And Tony Kushner took them beyond the stage, to the center of American ideas. With authority and humor, Christopher Bram weaves these men's ambitions, affairs, feuds, loves, and appetites into a single sweeping narrative. Chronicling over fifty years of momentous change—from civil rights to Stonewall to AIDS and beyond—*EMINENT OUTLAWS* is an inspiring, illuminating tale: one that reveals how the lives of these men are crucial to understanding the social and cultural history of the American twentieth century.

## Customer Reviews

**\*Starred Review\*** Highly regarded novelist Bram *Strom*'s needed, spirited survey of post-WWII gay literature in America begins with this compelling line, *Strom*—"The gay revolution began as a literary revolution." In his view, many prominent gay novelists, playwrights, and poets—as their novels, plays, and poems rose in critical and public acceptance from *Strom*'s "outlaw" to *Strom*'s "pioneer" status—led the way for a social change that swept the country, by which gay life in general gained in increasing acceptance. The image the reader gathers from this learned but never stuffy analysis, brimming with *Strom*'s own well-considered and entertaining opinions, is a door of a darkened room slowly opening to admit the light from without. We begin our visitation to seminal writers with the first wave following the end of WWII, which included such figures, now thought of as luminaries, as Tennessee Williams, Gore

Vidal, Allen Ginsburg, and James Baldwin. Just as recovery from illness is not a perfect trajectory upward, the reaction to gay lit wavered, even in increasingly tolerant times, certainly hitting a speed bump during the AIDS crisis. Bram notes an irony in the present day: even as the economy has resulted in a shrinking publishing industry, vast strides in gay acceptance have been made. For all literature collections striving for inclusion and relevance. --Brad Hooper

"Eminent Outlaws is a spectacular overview of our gay literary history." --Instinct Magazine  
"Bram does a terrific job in cataloguing the lives of these important figures, from Vidal to James Baldwin to Michael Cunningham. He reveals their often tortured interior lives. His examinations of the works themselves are original and thoughtful. Eminent Outlaws is entertaining and informative, packed with interesting gossip and opinions." --Columbia Journalism Review

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