From Michelangelos David to Calvin Kleins hunks in briefs, the cult of the beautiful male body has been at the heart of much of gay culture. But there is more to gay life than buffed pecs and rippled abs. Les Wrights The Bear Book is a surprising collection of sociological and literary essays about gay bears: hefty, bearded men who look for the same attributes in their partners. The gay bear phenomenon started more than a decade ago—in response to AIDS, some commentators note here—and has become a defining identity for many gay men. The Bear Book examines the range of bear culture—bear magazines, bear clubs, bear Web sites—and in doing so explores how gay male culture evolves in response to the needs of its members and to the broader culture.

My Personal Review:
While this book is heavy on history, it also reads like a college textbook into the history, culture, health and psychological aspect of the gay men who identify as "bears".

Some of the chapters dragged, especially the ones dealing with the early 90's and the chat rooms and drama...but the ones that touched me were the personal coming out stories, and the men coming to terms with their bodies and attitudes in conservative America. Definitly a book that will stay on my shelf for many years to come.

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