



## The Lesbian Edition

Print it out

Volume 1 Number 11

- [Books reviewed in this issue](#) (printable list)
- [PDF of this issue](#)
- [Printer-Friendly version](#)

**As we go to press, we have news that Radclyffe Hall was slated for arrest if *The Well of Loneliness* had been published in England in the 1920s, as well as news of the deaths of Shirley Chisholm and Susan Sontag. Details below...**

### In this issue

#### News

- [Arresting Radclyffe](#)
- [Shirley Chisholm](#)
- [Susan Sontag](#)
- [Awards and Prizes](#)
- [Bookstore News](#)
- [Writing Wanted](#)

#### Books

- [New Presses](#)
- [Big Books](#)
- [Trying Times...](#)
- [Claiming Our Own](#)
- [Graphic \(Auto\)Biography](#)
- [4 from Seal + 2](#)
- [Fiction](#)
- [Friday Night Romance](#)
- [Bit Parts](#)
- [Periodically Yours](#)
- [Now in Paperback](#)
- [What They Are Reading](#)
- [The Crime Scene](#)
- [Caught Reading](#)

I hope you, too, have had a chance to take some reflective, rejuvenating time after those disheartening elections, to get re-centered, and to plan your strategy for the next four years. Some of the best strategies I've heard are to simply continue with our work and to be as relentless as the need for human dignity. One of the most important daily tasks that we're going to have to do to sustain our energy is to appreciate one another, regularly, for all that we continue to do in the face of such madness. So – thank you for being there and for caring about lesbian literature.

Thanks, too, to everyone who helped me troubleshoot BTWOF's new, not-as-perfect-as-promised renewal system. I think we're on the home stretch with it now, and I look forward to a new year where my focus can be on the books instead of the technology.

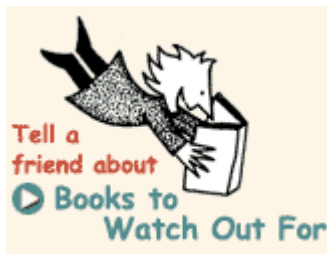
On the publishing side, the sad news is the demise of *The Women's Review of Books*, after 22 years of publishing. They'd been running in the red, intermittently for years, and their sponsoring organization, The Wellesley Centers for Women, couldn't continue to absorb their debt. December was their last issue, but they are still actively seeking another publishing partner or sponsor to provide a third leg of support. Check their Web site for more information: <http://www.wellesley.edu/womensreview/>.

But this issue brings good news, too: the launching of Aqueduct, an exciting new feminist press, the first books from Bywater Books, and a host of other, wonderful books.

May you have a wonderful, peaceful, and book-filled new year in which we can, somehow, come closer to bringing peace to all the peoples of this planet.

Yours in spreading the words,  
Carol

[back to top](#)



### About BTWOF

Books to Watch Out For publishes monthly e-letters celebrating books on various topics. Each issue includes new book

### Arresting Radclyffe Hall

Documents released in England last week under a new freedom of information act reveal that the British government made secret preparations in 1928, for an obscenity trial with the twin goals of having *The Well of Loneliness* banned and putting Radclyffe Hall in prison for "corrupting the young" by publishing it.

Home Secretary William Joynson Hicks, serving under Stanley Baldwin, wrote in one of the documents, "After a long, private conference with the Lord Chancellor, we came to the conclusion that the book is both obscene and indecent, and I wrote a letter to the publishers asking for its withdrawal. If they decline, proceed at once."

The publisher, Jonathan Cape, replied with a letter from Hall in which she described "inverts" as "an oppressed and misunderstood section of the social body" and stated that she was "proud and happy to have taken up her pen in defense of the persecuted."

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 compiled by Richard Labonte.

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### More Books for Women

will launch in 2005.

» [Click here](#) to be notified when it launches.



**Q.** How does BTWOF define "a lesbian book?"

**A.** We think that any book that belongs to a lesbian is a lesbian book, just as any bike that belongs to a girl is "a girl's bike."

### BTWOF: The Lesbian Edition

covers a wide range of books likely to be of interest to our readers as well as books with lesbian content and books by lesbian writers.



### 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:

The Department of Public Prosecutions' reaction? "I cannot help thinking that she would have some difficulty in establishing this proposition before a jury."

Cape appeared to agree to withdraw the book and the DPP was about to report "the matter satisfactorily concluded" but Jonathan Cape had arranged for an English-language edition to be printed in France. The plan was foiled, however, when the Post Office - under Home Office warrant - intercepted "certain packets" from Paris addressed to Cape's London office and seized 300 copies of the book.

On 9 November, the DPP obtained an order requiring that all copies of the book be destroyed.

Jonathan Cape finally published the book in England two decades later, in 1949, six years after Radclyffe Hall's death.

The book also suffered an obscenity trial in the U.S. Depressing and difficult as the book is for contemporary readers – and perhaps because it offered a relatively negative portrayal of lesbian options – it was widely circulated and read in English-reading countries all around the world and advised an entire generation that lesbianism was, in fact, an option, albeit not an easy one. Some current readers of the book, however, see the main character, Stephen Gordon, as more of an FTM than a lesbian.



[back to top](#)

### New Presses

#### Aqueduct Press

"Although feminist science fiction has been thriving for thirty years, its role as an oppositional literature means that it will almost never be 'mainstream' enough to [generate] bestsellers or even meet the bottom-line criterion of corporate publishers and booksellers.... As a sad consequence, the leading publishers often decline to bring fine works of feminist science fiction into print." -Mission Statement, Aqueduct Press.

"Bringing challenging feminist science fiction to the demanding reader" is Aqueduct's goal. And the fledgling press delivers – Publisher Timmel Duchamp has launched five fascinating and impeccably produced books since April. BTWOF caught up with her while she was in San Francisco promoting her first list.

Duchamp started out as a musician, made a brief foray into academia, and then, while writing a "scandalously shameless roman à clef for the amusement of her friends and colleagues" fell into "the fierce and delirious pleasures of fiction-writing." Her first short story, "Welcome, Kid, to the Real World," despite taking 10 years to find its way into print, was short-listed for the 1996 Tiptree Award. She made her first sale, "O's Story," in 1989, to Susanna Sturgis for *Memories and Visions: Women's Fantasy and Science Fiction*. The stories she's published in the intervening years have garnered three more Tiptree nominations, several Hugo nominations and have been among the finalists for Sturgeon and Nebula awards. But short stories, like feminist essays on the state of science fiction, have a tendency to disappear from sight and the audiences for both continue to be ignored by most book publishers. So what is a passionate writer of both to do? Launch a publishing house.

And what a house it is.

The first book off press was **Love's Body, Dancing in Time**, a rich collection of Duchamp's hitherto hard to find short stories. It was quickly followed by esteemed British science fiction writer Gwyneth Jones' **Life**. And then Duchamp really got going and published the first three volumes in Aqueduct's Conversation Pieces series: **The Grand Conversation: Essays by L. Timmel Duchamp**, four essays celebrating the history and contributions of feminist science fiction; **With Her Body: Short Fiction by Nicola Griffith**; and **Changeling: A Novella by Nancy Jane Moore**.

- » your subscriber profile
- » whatever has changed.

### Finding BTWOF

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

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San Francisco, CA 94131.

Send books for review consideration for the **Lesbian Edition** to the San Francisco address above.

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.



**Life** is the only one of the five I didn't let myself devour within 48 hours of bringing them home – I'm hoarding it as my reward for getting this issue off to press. Jones' central question: "How can something as fragile and unstable as human sexual difference as *it really is*, be the cause of so much suffering? How can this problem ever be solved? What would the solution cost?" I can't wait! \$19 paper, 370 pages.



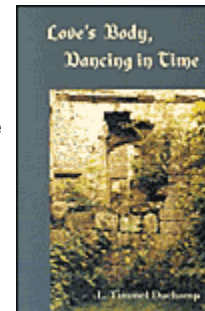
*"This is an ambitious, focused, unblinking troublemaker of a book. Our heroine struggles not to make waves about the more or less subtle sex discrimination she suffers while she pursues clues to a genetic shift that is already, quietly, transmuting our current gender conflicts – and perhaps all of society – into something new."*—Suzy McKee Charnas

*"Always surprising, always profound, this is Jones at her brilliant best and there is no one better."*—Karen Joy Fowler

For more on Gwyneth Jones:

<http://homepage.ntlworld.com/gwynethann/>

**Love's Body, Dancing in Time** collects five of Timmel Duchamp's, well, love stories. Queer and often lesbian, passionate, sometimes tender, always intelligent and feminist and totally lacking in simplistic resolutions, they include Sturgeon Award finalist "Dance at the Edge," the Tiptree short-listed "The Apprenticeship of Isabetta di Pietro Cavazzi," as well as a new take on the Héloïse and Abelard story. \$16 paper, 191 pages.



*"This handful of SF tales demonstrates superbly what the genre can really do. Rich with social resonance, these stories elicit the thrill of ideas struggling to manifest as pure drama. Duchamp writes some of the most rewarding science fiction stories you can read today; she is simply and unarguably among the best."*—Samuel R. Delany

The chapbooks in the "Conversation Pieces" series may be harder to find. If your local independent bookstore can't get them for you, order them direct (address at the end or order online with PayPal). You won't find them listed at the online superstores. Order all three \$8 books for the price of one standard hardcover.



But most stores that sell any science fiction at all should be glad to turn whatever cartwheels it takes to pick up the extremely popular Nicola (*Ammonite*, *Slow River*, *The Blue Place*, *Stay*) Griffith's new short story collection, **With Her Body**. "Touching Fire," "Song of Bullfrogs, Cry of Geese," and "Yaguara" are all haunting, fiercely women-oriented tales of lesbians making their way in one world or another. As Duchamp says in her afterword, "A Word for Human is Woman," "... SF that focuses on the male subject as representative of the human misses crucial aspects of the problem..... By avoiding being caught up in resistance to the status quo, Griffith also avoids taking the status quo as the ground from which she must work and allows herself to tell alternative – new – stories that would otherwise be impossible to tell...." \$8, 120 pages.

Nancy Jane Moore is a writer to watch, if her novella, **Changeling**, is any indication. It's an eminently satisfying, sweetly unraveling story centering on a wheelchair using woman who rolls through walls into a dimension her parents frequented when young.... Well, that's the format. The content is much richer than my description. \$8, 75 pages.

Perhaps best of all, for the thinking science fiction reader, are Duchamp's four essays collected in **The Grand Conversation**: "For a Genealogy of Feminist: Reflections on Women, Feminism, and Science Fiction 1818-1960," "The Cliché from Outerspace: Reflections on Reports of a Death Greatly Exaggerated," "What can Never be: The Ancient Dream of a Transparent — Universal — Language" and "Old Pictures: The Discursive Instability of Feminist SF." \$8, 80 pages.



Find Aqueduct Press at P.O. Box 95787, Seattle, WA 98145, or at:

<http://aqueductpress.com/>

For more about L. Timmel Duchamp:

<http://timmel.home.mindspring.com/>

For more on Gwyneth Jones:

<http://homepage.ntlworld.com/gwynethann/>

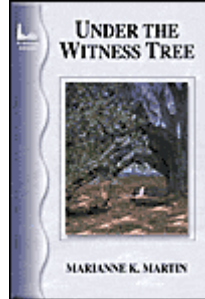
For more on Nicola Griffith:

<http://www.nicolagriffith.com/index2.html>

For more on Nancy Jane Moore:

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

### Bywater Books' First Books Are Out:

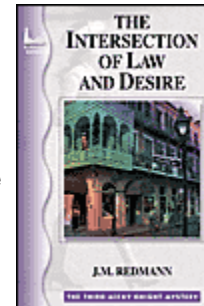


Bywater co-founder Marianne Martin (*Love in the Balance*, *Mirrors*) is one of the most popular writers from the Naiad/Bella legacy, and **Under the Witness Tree**, her first book from Bywater, will expand her readership. Dhari Weston's life is stressed enough – what with trying to stay an active player in her no-promises/no-commitments girlfriend's life, being the lynchpin that holds her troubled family together, and staying calm, cool and distant all the rest of the time - then an aunt she's never even heard of leaves her a house and a legacy of secrets that date back to the Civil War. Dhari just wants to sell it as quickly as possible and get back to her life, except for that interesting Dr. Hughes who does the historical evaluation of the property, and Nessie Tinker, her aunt's next-door neighbor and lifelong friend, and a few stories even older than Nessie that begin to pull at her heart. Can a lesbian romance acknowledge America's legacy of racism and still be a good Friday Night Read? Martin proves that it can. \$12.95, Bywater Books.

Read a sample chapter at:

<http://www.bywaterbooks.com/pdfs/witness.chap3.pdf>

Bywater's second book, **The Intersection of Law and Desire**, is a reprint from J. M. Redmann's excellent, Louisiana-based Micky Knight mystery series. I'm not normally a mystery reader, but that tough girl from the wrong side of the tracks (or would that be "from the wrong side of the bayou?") draws me in every time. Or maybe it's Redmann's eye for detail and her keen sense of social justice that does it to me? Or the fact that they're rich, complicated books, with complex plots and characters and issues? Whatever! I never met one I could resist. Bywater will republish Redmann's *Lost Daughters* this Spring and a new Micky Knight next Fall. \$12.95, Bywater Books.



Read the opening chapter of *Intersection* at:

<http://www.bywaterbooks.com/pdfs/intersection.chap1.pdf>

Bywater's Spring list also includes Val McDermid's sixth Lindsay Gordon mystery, **Hostage to Murder**.

You can find Bywater at: PO Box 3671, Ann Arbor 48196 or

[www.bywaterbooks.com](http://www.bywaterbooks.com)



[back to top](#)

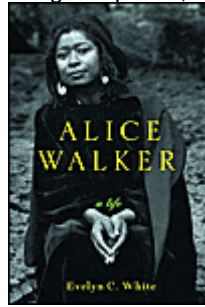
### The Big Books: Alice Walker and Life Mask

The big, and I do mean big (650 and 530 pages respectively), books this fall were Evelyn C. White's biography, **Alice Walker**, and Emma Donoghue's historical fiction, **Life Mask**.

#### Alice Walker

I once had an opportunity to ask octogenarian Harry Hay (1912-2002), who is credited by many as being the founder of the contemporary gay movement, what advice he had to offer younger activists on how to stay

sane over so many decades of activism and he replied, after a long and thoughtful pause, "Have a good biographer."



Alice Walker has found such a biographer in Evelyn C. White. While Alice Walker has already written extensively about her life (*In Search of Our Mother's Gardens* and *The Way Forward is With a Broken Heart* come immediately to mind, as well as daughter Rebecca Walker's challenging *Black, White and Jewish: Autobiography of a Shifting Self*), in **Alice Walker**, White gives us a chance to put these pieces in the context of a life both challenged and well lived. It's too easy to forget, these decades later, that Walker's childhood and her family were shaped by the cruelties of sharecropping in a Jim Crow South. White gives us an opportunity to honor

the risks Walker's parents took to care for and educate their children.

If White, a consummate journalist and also the editor of *The Black Woman's Health Book* (\$16.95, Seal, 1995), author of *Chain Chain Change: For Black Women in Abusive Relationships* (\$12.95, Seal, 1994), and co-author of the photography book *The African Americans* (Viking, 1993), is, at times, less critical of her subject than some readers might wish, she also gives us Walker's commitment to being herself rather than being who the world – or even her admirers – want her to be. She gives us a context to begin to understand the roads Walker traveled on her life's journeys, a chance to see how those journeys informed her writing, and moments of incredible grace and insight – such as Walker's first grade teacher's remarks when Alice won a Pulitzer for *The Color Purple* and the story behind the title of *Revolutionary Petunias*.

Ten years in the writing, the book still ends too soon. We come away wanting to know *more* about what Alice has been up to these past few years, still more about the relationships she builds with both men and women, more about how she's navigating life and work, struggle and love... but, in the end, wanting more is the definition of the perfect ending. Volume II will be well worth the wait. In the meantime, if you want a good reading project, pick up the biography and re-read Walker's novels and poetry from start to finish, as you read about the life that shaped the art. \$29.95, Norton.

### Life Mask

Working-class girl turned historian (PhD from Cambridge), Emma Donoghue is building a career around the intersections of history, impeccable research, and excellent fiction. **Life Mask** was initially inspired by an epigram about eighteenth century actress Eliza Farren:



*Her little stock of private fame  
Will fall a wreck to public clamour,  
If Farren leagues with one whose name  
Comes near—aye, very near—to DAMN HER.*

"*What the...?!*" was Donoghue's response when she first came across it. She did her research and built this 650-page tale on the lives of the self-made actress Farren, Beau Monde-member and sculptor Anne Damer, and their mutual friend, the Lord Derby, who was both the richest and ugliest man in the House of Lords. There's so much going on in **Life Mask** that you can almost choose the book you want to read:

- a deliciously written historical novel set in the stormy, closing decade of the eighteenth century
- a parody of contemporary politics – complete with a Mad King George, hysteria about terrorists (French and American revolutionaries) being used to justify curtailing civil liberties, and even a spot of scapegoating queers for the moral decline of society
- a fictional but fiercely accurate rendering of the long fight for parliamentary reform set amidst the French Revolution
- a painless-to-read account of how class privilege (and the lack thereof) affects would-be lesbian's options
- or a great study on the (very) slow process of coming into one's lesbianism in a time and place where the concept doesn't really exist

Oh, what the hell. Just read it for the fun of it.

Donoghue is perhaps best known for her fiction (*Stir Fry*, *Hood*,

*Slammerkin*), her short stories – also based on historical tidbits – *The Woman Who Gave Birth to Rabbits*, and the allegedly Young Adult oriented *Kissing the Witch*, but she's put in her time recovering our histories with *Passions Between Women: British Lesbian Culture 1668-1801*, *We Are Michael Field*, a joint biography of lovers and literary collaborators Katherine Bradley and Edith Cooper, as well as *Poems Between Women*, an extraordinary collection that pays homage to four centuries of women's passions, friendships, and expressions of love.

Harcourt obviously expects **Life Mask** to be big with both straight and gay readers – they printed 150,000 copies of the hardcover. Her next book, Donoghue promises, is a “very lesbian” novel about immigration, a topic she has considerable experience with, having done it twice – once from Ireland to England, then again to Canada. \$26, Harcourt.

Read an excerpt:

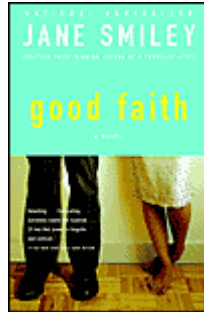
<http://www.harcourtbooks.com/bookcatalogs/bookpage.asp?isbn=0151009430&option=excerpt>

For an interview with Emma Donoghue:

<http://www.curledup.com/intdono.htm>

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These are trying times...



I loved Jane Smiley's *A Thousand Acres* but keep finding myself not quite interested in most of the books she's written since. But, egged on by a reading group, I just waded through **Good Faith**. While I didn't exactly enjoy the time I spent inside the head of well-intended real estate agent Joe Stratford and his limited world view, I have to say that the novel is a brilliant portrait of a time when social expectations changed drastically, and speculation, entitlement, and greed became cultural norms. In these post-election weeks, it offers a revealing look at a time when “American decency” degenerated into a society that could elect a madman like George W.

Bush. \$13.95, Anchor.

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Claiming Our Own

Neither of these is touted as a lesbian book – you'll just have to read between the lines.

**Ms. Moffett's First Year**

In the spring of 2000, facing stricter requirements for teachers and a worsening national teacher shortage, New York City's Board of Education recruited “talented professionals from other fields” to teach in some of the district's worst schools. Legal secretary (and ex-feminist bookstore worker) Donna Moffett answered an ad for the program and seven weeks later, with the briefest of training programs under her belt, she was on her own, running a first-grade class at P.S. 92 in Flatbush, a job that made legal work look like a piece of cake.

Abby Goodnough, a *New York Times* education reporter, wrote an award-winning series of front-page articles that followed Moffett through her first year. Then she expanded it into **Ms. Moffett's First Year: Becoming a Teacher in America**, a challenging, harrowing, and sometimes frightening book about one woman's passionate commitment to making a difference, about succeeding with many (but never all) of the children, and of persevering in an environment that has neither the resources nor the freedom to educate poor and immigrant children. It's a brave and fascinating tale, whether you're interested in early childhood education or not.

I was surprised however, that Goodnough seemed to fall prey to the five-year-old's notion that first grade teachers don't really exist outside of school hours. We do learn, however, that back in her twenties, Moffett worked at Jane Addams, Chicago's first feminist bookstore and that, during her Chicago years, she'd been liberated by the feminist movement, literature, the arts, and social justice projects, but Goodnough leaves readers to



extrapolate the rest for themselves. In any case, it was wonderful to find out how one of the early workers in the feminist bookstore movement is changing the world these days, one student at a time. \$25, Public Affairs/Perseus Books Group.

### Cooking with Grease



Organizer Donna Brazile, on the other hand, takes on organizing the entire Democratic Party, Al Gore's campaign for President, and more than a few marches on Washington while recounting her adventures from 30 years of political organizing in **Cooking with Grease: Stirring the Pots in American Politics**. Child of the civil rights era and growing up in a black, working-poor Louisiana family, she swore to herself as a child (on the day after Martin Luther King was assassinated) that she'd find a way to make a difference – and she has. Brazile worked on her first political campaign at age nine when she campaigned for a city council candidate who promised (and delivered) a park for kids in her poor-and-black side of the tracks neighborhood. She was hooked. By the time she wrote this book her achievements included her life goal of running a Democratic national presidential campaign, as well as working on Jesse Jackson's presidential campaign, the 1982 March on Washington demanding that Martin Luther King be honored with a national holiday, the 1983 20th Anniversary March on Washington, helping to develop the National Political Congress of Black Women, and serving on the Board of Directors for the GLBTQ March on Washington. It's a fascinating read about both how organizing for change works on a national level and how a woman gains political expertise and power in the political arena, in a system that is still fiercely racist and sexist.

I wish Brazile had been able to be as straightforward about her personal life as she is about her political life. – Some years back she put the entire [white male] gay media in a twit by telling the *Washington Post*, when asked if she was gay, "If I had a personal life, I'd have a sexual orientation." – Myself, I dream of a day when white gay men spend their lives organizing for the rights of blacks and women and the days when women, black and white, straight and gay, and every combination thereof, can have both political ambitions and personal lives, and be open about both. **Cooking with Grease** is heady, inspiring stuff. Don't miss it. \$23, Simon & Schuster. What's Brazile up to now? Check out her Web site.

<http://www.brazileassociates.com>

For Brazile's statement on Shirley Chisholm's death:

<http://www.brazileassociates.com/viewBlog.cfm?id=34>

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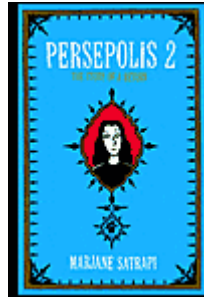
### Graphic (Auto)Biography - For People Who Think

In **Rent Girl** Michelle Tea, who got involved with sex work when the sexy girl she was dating revealed that was how she made her living, writes about why she got involved in the work, what it was like, why she stayed and why she left. Being Tea, she tells complex truths about both her own experiences and prostitution in general by writing about everyday realities - from the allure of the "glamour" to coping with obnoxious johns, crabs, low blood sugar, and racist porn while living with the high physical and emotional cost of the work. Tea's straightforward, yet nuanced storytelling works wonderfully well with McCubbin's elegantly layered graphics.



Both Tea and illustrator Laurenn McCubbin struggled with how to portray the work and came up with a blend of story and illustration that conveys the reality of sex work and avoids the traditional sex-work stereotypes: pathology, fantasy, tragedy, or blissful empowerment. Tea researched the book with her life; McCubbin took hundreds of photos, combining a posture with an expression that often leaves the sex workers looking directly at the reader, making it clear that she and you know what's real, no matter what the john in the background might be thinking. It's a marvelous and useful book, one that is destined for awards.

\$24.95 paper, 300+ illustrations, Last Gasp.



More graphic autobiography? No, not the least bit lesbian, but if you haven't already read them, turn to **Persepolis** and the sequel, **Persepolis 2**, Marjane Satrapi's memoirs about growing up in Iran during the Islamic Revolution. The first book gives us a (very sophisticated) child's eye view of the radical cataclysm that the fundamentalist revolution wrought in this one child – and any child's life. The second follows the 14-year-old to high school in Vienna, her return to Tehran, and the life she manages to carve out for herself before deciding that she has to leave again. It's another case where the illustrations, in their sophisticated simplicity, are worth a thousand words – and do an even better job than words of reminding us all that war is simply not a solution.

Her next book, *Embroidery*, will tell her grandmother's story. It will be released in the USA in April. **Persepolis**, \$11.95, paper; **Persepolis 2**, \$17.95 cloth; both from Pantheon/Random House.

"One of the freshest and most original memoirs of our day." – *LA Times*

"Dance[s] with drama in insouciant wit." – *NYT Book Review*

To read an interview with Satrapi:

[http://www.bookslut.com/features/2004\\_10\\_003261.php](http://www.bookslut.com/features/2004_10_003261.php)

And for one artist's take on Satrapi's "reading" at Women and Children First:

[http://www.bookslut.com/features/2004\\_10\\_003279.php](http://www.bookslut.com/features/2004_10_003279.php)

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#### Four from Seal Press + 2

Seal Press just continues to continue to publish good, insightful feminist (but not necessarily lesbian) books. And just when you begin to think that all the bases have been covered, they come up with something new – like **Secrets & Confidences: The Complicated Truth about Women's Friendships**.



From editor Karen Eng's introduction (see below) to the very last account, these true-life adventure tales of friendships essential, maddening, gone awry, lost (and found), and friendships changed by pregnancy (or lack thereof), and first friends (at any age) left me wondering how we managed for so long without this excellent, insightful, and very readable collection. I was surprised, though at how few contributions addressed friendships that include sexual passion or friendships among lesbians. Perhaps those stories are in forthcoming anthologies? Maybe this is the beginning of a series.

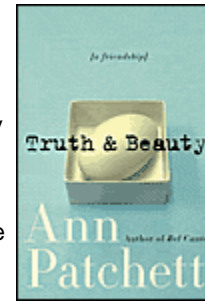
Contributors include women you'd read in *Bitch*, and *Bust*, and *Tikkun*, and hear on NPR – Andi Zeisler, Ellen Forney, Ayun Halliday, L.A. Miller (editor, *Women Who Eat: A New Generation on the Glory of Food*), and many more. \$14.95, Seal Press.

"A few years ago, I went through a traumatic breakup with my best friend.... I wasn't quite prepared for how cataclysmic the experience would be. Deep down, I knew I was doing what was necessary for my own well-being, but there was little accepted wisdom about how to cope with my confusion and grief.... If this had been a romantic relationship, answers would have been screaming at me from all directions. But because this was "only" a friend, prescriptions were vague and solace hard to come by. We are supposed to accumulate meaningful friendships, not jettison them. In a time when people accept the view that many, if not most marriages flounder, we still cling to the view that our friendships should somehow go on for life...." –from Karen Eng's introduction

"But the dangerous friend isn't dangerous because she's daring, or precocious, or even reckless. She's dangerous because she makes you trust her against all logical judgment, makes you want to please her even if your own happiness is compromised, and imprints herself on your mind with disconcerting speed and force." –from Andi Zeisler's "Breaking Up with Smitty"



**Truth & Beauty** offers another look at friendships between women. In this case, it's Ann Patchett (*Bel Canto*, *The Magician's Assistant*, *The Patron Saint of Liars*) recalling her decades-long, sometimes difficult, always essential friendship with sister writer Lucy Grealy (*Autobiography of a Face*). Patchett and Grealy met in college, became fast friends while both attended the Iowa Writers Workshop, and saw each other through good times, surgeries, writing blocks (trading images like a Magician's Assistant back and forth), various crises, and relationships too numerous to mention.



*"Even when Lucy was devastated or difficult, she was the person I knew best in the world, the person I was the most comfortable with. Whenever I saw her, I felt like I had been living in another country, doing moderately well in another language, and then she showed up speaking English and suddenly I could speak with all the complexity and nuance that I hadn't even realized was gone. With Lucy I was a native speaker."*

It's a wonderful portrayal of a relationship that ended only with Lucy's death, and of staying with a friendship even through the most difficult of times. I did come away wondering, though, with such a powerful connection, did neither of them ever consider becoming lovers? Certainly it must have occurred to them – Patchett, after all, wrote *The Magician's Assistant* during these years. But if it did come up, it's not in the book. Everything else is, though. \$23.95, Harper Collins. Look for the paperback in April. To read Ann Patchett on writing this book and on the intersection of fiction and in her life:

<http://www.powells.com/fromtheauthor/patchett.html>

But back to Seal Press:

Don't read Claudine Monteil's **The Beauvoir Sisters: An Intimate Look at How Simone and H el ene Influenced Each Other and the World** for insight into Simone's relationships with women. Read it, instead, for the tales of H el ene's founding of battered women's shelters, both sisters' connections with Carol Downer and the Feminist Women's Health Centers, the harassment Simone received for writing *The Second Sex*, the circle of younger feminist friends from the Women's Liberation Movement that surrounded them both during the latter parts of their lives – and to recall the incredible courage it took to stand up for abortion rights in those halcyon days of the early 70s. And for a cautionary tale about how easily we could lose many of these essential feminist advances. Claudine Monteil was one of the WLM "girls." She started writing this memoir the morning after H el ene died. Translated by Marjolijn de Jager. \$14.95, Seal Press.



*"I've said this to you (her circle of younger feminist cohorts) and I shall say it again. The few womens' rights we have managed to extract by struggling long and hard these past few years are fragile. Very fragile. All it takes is another economic, political, or religious crisis for them to be challenged. All of you, as long as you live, you will have to watch that society and the politicians don't cunningly nibble away at these rights. You'll have to be on your guard, don't ever forget that."*—Simone de Beauvoir



I wish the recent elections had rendered Kristin Rose-Finkbeiner's **The F Word: Feminism in Jeopardy: Women, Politics, and the Future** obsolete.

Unfortunately, younger women and older women both need "the F word" and the practice of voting even more now than before the election. I, for one, was haunted by those news shots of long voting lines snaking into the night, in precincts with too few voting machines. Those lines should never have happened, but it's recorded on film that very few women had the option of standing for hours in those lines – they had to leave to pick up the kids, feed them, put them to bed or tend the elderly parents, or.... And, as we all know by now, women who do get to vote, vote

Democrat in higher numbers than men, and so the long lines biased outcome of the election in yet another way.... \$14.95, Seal.

I'd meant to include **Word: On Being a [Woman] Writer**, edited by Jocelyn Burrell, in last issue's gift recommendations. I've rarely met an anthology of women's writings about writing that I didn't devour, and this one is no exception. Most of the essays are reprints, but are worth rereading, should you have come across them before. Editor Jocelyn Burrell's introductions add useful context to some of the more familiar pieces. Lesbian contributors range from Jennifer DiMarco and Judith Clark to Liza Fiol-Matta and Jeannette Winterson, but the whole collection is about renegades and troublemakers who think and see and envision outside the box. And what could be more true for lesbians, than, say, Algerian writer Assia Djebar's



*"...Thus, in a religion that begins with an almost sacred emigration, the woman becomes a constant emigrant, without a destination.... Simply a migrant. The most beautiful label, I believe, in Islamic culture."*

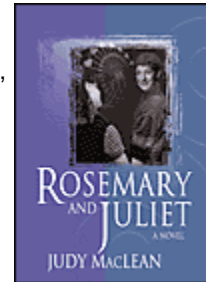
Or Liza Fiol-Matta on growing up Puerto Rican on American Army bases: *"No matter how well we speak English, or how light or dark our skin is, or how well we do in school and work, there is always the lingering doubt that we are not 'loved for who we really are' but for the facsimile of the dominant culture that we can, with varying success, represent."*

Or Margaret Atwood's wry, dry, laugh out loud reflections on being a young poet in Canada in the 1960s – or Irish poet Eavan Boland's call, in her "Letter to a Young Woman Poet," for women poets, from generation to generation, to befriend one another. Women writers, lesbian and not, all live outside the traditional canon, and what we have in common, in this anthology, is still much greater than our differences. \$16.95, The Feminist Press.



## Fiction

In **Rosemary and Juliet** Judy MacLean offers teens (and older readers) a contemporary version of Shakespeare's classic, complete with embattled families, dueling seconds, and some wonderful, unexpectedly in love teens. For the families, think ex-hippie single mom, abortion clinic director vs. head preacher at the fundamentalist queer-damning church. MacLean's portrayal of that daughter's working out the conflicts between her upbringing and her new love make it an excellent book for YAs caught in similar situations while reminding the rest of us that compassion is a better organizing tool than judgment. \$17.95 paperback, 265 pages, Alice Street Editions/Harrington Park Press.



## Friday Night Romance



Karin Kallmaker's first full-length Bella After Dark has tropical-resort fitness instructor Brandy Monsoon looking for passion, if not love, in **All the Wrong Places** as she tries to sort out her friendship with her straight colleague, keep up with the snazzy lesbian comedienne who shows up during Ladies on Vacation week, and resolve the odd family issue. Sounds like a lot for 170 pages, but wasting time isn't what Bella After Dark is about. And Brandy practices what she preaches: Do unto her what she wants so that she may do unto you what you want. The sheet-dives are all fun, but

Kallmaker also serves up characters who learn something in between the O's, and ends with her trademark dose of lingering contentment. \$12.95, Bella After Dark.

And for those whose pleasures hearken back to medieval England, newcomer Anna Furtado offers **The Heart's Desire**, a sweet tale of unexpected friendships, of overcoming adversity, of circumstances that mediate the independence women in any age need to pursue their own paths, of unexpected friendships, and, of course, a few villains. Oh, and did I mention the wise young spice merchant who inherited her skills and her business from her father and the plucky young noblewoman who seeks to apprentice with her? Look for soft fades, rather than throbbing passion. Non-standard typesetting, unfortunately, detracts a bit from the reading pleasure. \$15.95, Yellow Rose Books.



I wanted to like Peggy Herring's **White Lace and Promises**. The set up certainly intrigued me: a little class-conflict between long-term and passionate lovers Dr. Maxine Weston and beautician Betina Abbott – or maybe it's just that classic butch-wants-to-be-waited-on thing getting a little out of hand? Whatever, it all comes tumbling down when Betina is broadsided with an inexplicable and immobilizing depression, and suddenly we have another great plot twist: long-term couple in a crisis that tests their relationship. And while I could certainly understand physician Maxine's blind allegiance to antidepressants (the crisis they create in this couple's sex life is another great plot twist), I kept waiting for someone (a friend, one of the therapists, Betina's brother, the author, anyone!) to protest Maxine's heavy-handed commitment to long-term drugs for a situation that might well resolve without them. Now *that* is the resolution I was looking for. That or a situation that would truly require the level of drugs prescribed in this novel. Herring's fans and readers who are less critical of the medical model for treating psychological problems may enjoy the book more than I did. \$12.95, Bella.

### Bit Parts

#### Ladies Coupé

Published in 23 countries around the world, **Ladies Coupé** would be treated as a major publishing phenomena were it not about, well, women – ordinary women from the vast communities of third-world women who have yet to achieve – or perhaps even to dream of – equal pay for equal work, equal education for girls, employment without sexual harassment....

Indian writer Anita Nair uses an overnight trip in the Ladies' Coupé (the women-only compartment on Indian trains) as the vehicle for looking at six vastly different women's lives, the limitations society has placed on them, the options they've carved out for themselves, and the possibility of contentment. Central character Akhila's question is, having lost the option of a traditional marriage when she was forced to become the family breadwinner as a teenager and having done all that could possibly have been expected of her, what's left for her? The stories move as steadily as a train through the night, giving the reader a glimpse into lives rarely written about, and Akhila the answers she needs.

The bit parts? One of the women, Mari, worked for two foreign doctors and came to understand why the one lady doctor crossed the hall to the other lady doctor's room every night, and later used that information to make her way in another situation.... And Mari's final decisions about her life? Well, we get answers to Akhila's dilemmas; maybe a future novel will tell us more about Mari's. Still, **Ladies Coupé** achieves that essential feminist dream of serving up a host of options to women (in this case, in 23 countries), and trusting that each reader will find the inspiration she needs to move her own life in the directions she chooses. \$14.95, St. Martins Press.



#### Queer Beats



The news for women, in Regina Marler's **Queer Beats: How the Beats Turned America On to Sex**, isn't so good:

"[A]n audience member asked (Gregory Corso) why there were no women among the Beat writers: (Corso responded,) 'There were women, they were there, I knew them, their families put them in institutions, they were given electric shock. In the 50s if you were male you could be a rebel, but if you were female, your families had you locked up.'"

**Queer Beats** is mostly about the queer men at the time and a few of the guys' wives and girlfriends and casual flings. That said, it's a fascinating look at an under-credited part of gay history with quick glimpses into the contributions of Diane Di Prima, Jane Bowles, and Elise Cowen. \$16.95, Cleis Press.

For deeper looks at the women whose rebellion and intellectual thought laid the basis for the next decade's women's movement, turn to **Girls Who Wore Black: Women Writing the Beat Generation** by Ronna Johnson (\$22 paper, Rutgers) or **Women of the Beat Generation: The Writers, Artists, and Muses at the Heart of Revolution** by Brenda Knight (\$16.95, Conari Press).



[back to top](#)

### Periodically Yours,

*Sinister Wisdom* is back in print again, with the *Lesbian Writers on Writing and Reading* issue (#62). Look for classically lesbian/feminist articles on how lesbian writing saves lives, true life adventures, Katherine V. Forrest on "The Mystery of Lesbian Mysteries," and Alix Dobkin, Carla Trujillo, Lee Lynch, Janny MacHarg, Tee Corinne, Ida Red, Jean Taylor, Judith K. Witherow, Gloria Anzaldúa, and many more. A bargain at \$6 + \$1.50 p&h. Better yet, subscribe for the year for \$20. *Sinister Wisdom*, PO Box 3252, Berkeley, CA 94703.

*Chroma: A Queer Literary Journal* launched in England in August. Edited by Shaun Levin this issue features a mix of tormented (yet lyrical) stories about guilt, love, mad boyfriends, and sisters from hell along with poetry and artwork. Funded, in part by Arts Council England (and what a good use of their money!), it's a great place to look for emerging and cutting edge talent. More contributions by boys than girls, alas, but it has one of the best writing-wanted sections that I've seen in a long time. "Tormented" was the theme for the first issue. "Beauty," "Foreigners," and "Competition" are upcoming themes. US\$20/year at <http://www.gaymenwriting.co.uk/> via PayPal, or write *Chroma*, PO Box 44655, London, N16 0WQ, England.



[back to top](#)

### Now in Paperback

**Trace Elements of Random Tea Parties**, Felicia Luna Lemus, \$12.95, Seal Press.

**Salt Roads**, Nalo Hopkinson, \$14.95, Warner Books.

**The Funny Thing Is...**, Ellen DeGeneres, \$12, Simon & Schuster.

**The Way the Crow Flies**, Ann-Marie MacDonald, \$14.95, Harper.

Fair warning: **Crows** drifts along very pleasantly for the first 300 pages or so – and then it will take over your life until you get to that very last page. It's one of those books you want all of your friends to be reading at the same time, so have a place to go with your anger,



frustration, tension....

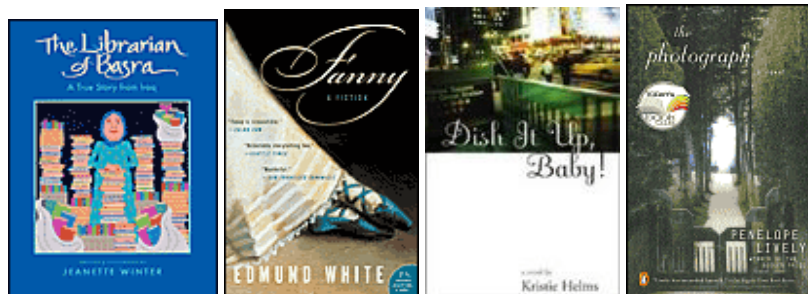


[back to top](#)

### What They're Reading at A Room of One's Own in Madison

*The staff at A Room of One's Own in Madison, WI is busy gearing up for Winter textbook sales on the heels of a decent holiday season, but they made time to tell us about some of their favorite books:*

\* Books with lesbian content.



**Life Mask\*** by Emma Donoghue was a very good read judging from the fact that each time I picked it up, I was transported in time. Emma Donoghue made me feel that I knew each character and their motivations intimately, probably due to her outstanding ability to express female emotion through the written word. As for the sex bits, well, the hint of erotica is always better than the deed. If you've just finished *Tipping The Velvet*, don't go right into *Life Mask*; it'll be way too subtle for you. Try *Slammerkin*. \$26.00 cloth, HBJ. –Heidi

**Dish It Up Baby\*** by Kristie Helms. This novel reads like a love letter to New York. It captures the dynamic experience of a young woman living in New York and finding her way. At times serious and others comedic but always keeping a grip on reality. \$14.95, Firebrand Books. –Sashe

**A Perfect Age** by Heather Skyler. This first novel by local Madisonian Heather Skyler was featured at this year's Wisconsin Book Festival. It is a coming of age story that picks up and leaves off at the beginning and end of the summer for three years, and in that time the main character, a fifteen-year-old girl, develops into a young woman, while her mother finding her own life to be confining, explores a life outside her family. It is nice to be reminded that even women with grown children still have as many needs and unfulfilled desires as their teenage daughters. \$24.95 cloth, Norton. –Heidi

**Fanny – A Fiction\*** by Edmund White. Through the veil of historical fiction, Edmund White contemplates gender inequality, American politics and culture, racial distinctions, and religion, and allows readers to draw parallels to modern day. It is written from the viewpoint of Frances Trollope, famous in the 1800s for her book attacking the United States, as she writes a biography of her equally famous friend Fanny Wright, the radical and feminist. It is a conversational, quirky novel that reminds us of two women that should not be forgotten. \$13.95, Harper. –Heidi

**Ordinary Wolves** by Seth Kantner. This new novel captures the essence of what it would be like to live as an Eskimo and, furthermore, gives the reader a true feeling of what it means to live a life of sustenance. The story is told from a unique voice and the writing is definitely refreshing, taking the reader right into a life in Alaska. \$22.00 cloth, Milkweed. –Sashe

**The Photograph** by Penelope Lively. A famous British archeologist finds a photograph of his dead wife with her brother-in-law and uses his training to uncover the facts about his wife's infidelity. Another excellent novel by the

Booker Prize-winning author of *Moon Tiger*. \$14.00, Penguin. –Sandi

**Grassroots: A Field Guide for Feminist Activism** by Jennifer Baumgardner and Amy Richards. I'm excited about this new book from the authors of *Manifesta*. The authors seem to have matured a bit since writing that first book and, in this new volume, they give lots of great information and provide examples on how to stay active – an important message especially after this disappointing election. \$14.00, FSG. –Sandi

**The Forest Lover** by Susan Vreeland. This author returns to her favorite themes of painters and paintings with this novel about adventurous Canadian painter Emily Carr, whose work is currently being rediscovered. \$14.00, Penguin. –Sandi

#### Two for children:

**The Librarian of Basra: A True Story from Iraq** written and illustrated by Jeanette Winter. A wonderful true story about a librarian who had the foresight to know that her library would be a target in the forthcoming war and so moved over 30,000 books, including many irreplaceable volumes, into the basements of friends' homes and businesses. \$16.00 cloth, Harcourt. –Sandi

**Halibut Jackson** by David Lucas. Halibut Jackson is very shy and prefers to not be noticed. One day he wears brighter clothes than usual and discovers that it's not so bad being the center of attention for a change. A great story about being true to whom you are with subtle messages about gender and wardrobe. \$16.95 cloth, Knopf. –Sandi

#### Two Books to Watch Out For:

**Lighthousekeeping** by Jeanette Winterson. This story of an independent young woman who grows up in a lighthouse is an excellent historical fable in the tradition of Winterson's *Sexing the Cherry*. \$23.00 cloth, Harcourt, April 2005. –Sandi

**March** by Geraldine Brooks. The long-awaited new novel by the author of *Year of Wonders* tells the story of the absent father of the March girls in Louisa May Alcott's *Little Women* books. March, as imagined by Brooks using information about Alcott's own father, becomes a Chaplain in the Civil War and reveals his feelings of powerlessness in the face of the cruelty, racism and suffering of war. \$24.95 cloth, Viking, March 2005. –Sandi

Many thanks to Heidi, Sashe, Sandi and all the women at A Room of One's Own for their help and for all the work they do to support our community. You can find them at 307 W. Johnson St., Madison, WI 53703. 608-257-7888. You can find them online at <http://www.roomofonesown.com>. There's a current list of women's bookstores at [www.litwomen.org/WIP/stores.html](http://www.litwomen.org/WIP/stores.html).



### The Crime Scene

By Nan Cinnater



**Death by Discount** by Mary Vermillion is a small-town Midwestern whodunit nearly worthy of Ellen Hart, which is to say it's strongly plotted and full of humor, atmosphere, and psychological complexity. Dyke DJ Mara Gilgannon investigates the murder of one of her lesbian aunts, helped out by best friend Vince, an irrepressible drag queen. Her aunts, Zee and Glad, ran the only radio station in their small Iowa town before Glad was killed, and they were deeply involved in a campaign to keep Wal-Mart out of their hometown. Vermillion uses the opportunity to educate about the giant corporation's impact, but she does so seamlessly and painlessly. \$13.95, Alyson.

Don't be misled by the Valentine-ish cover. **Guarded Hearts** by Hannah Rickard is a taut novel of suspense, centered on guard dogs and dog training. Alyssa Norland has left her shady corporate past behind and started a new life in a small Michigan town as a trainer for DOGS (Dixon's Obedience and Guard Services). Then her past comes back to haunt her, in the form of creepy, taunting phone calls and a series of burglaries targeting her clients. Okay, there is a romance. Alyssa's developing relationship with new love interest Sue Hunter is integral to the plot and pretty damn sexy, as well. But I found myself rushing through the sex scenes in order to get to the "good" parts – in this case the outstanding action sequences, with the dogs, the bad guys, and two very strong women. \$12.95, Bella.



**When the Corpse Lies** by Therese Szymanski is the sixth Motor City thriller featuring the very butch Brett Higgins, strip club manager and adult entertainment maven. This one turns on an elaborate revenge conspiracy involving cybersex, murder, bad girls and tests of true love. If you are already a Szymanski fan, you'll snap this up. If not, and you fancy a nearly equal mix of erotica and suspense, go for it! \$12.95, Bella.

Hannah Nyala is a real-life search and rescue tracker of Native American descent, who made a small critical splash with her memoir, **Point Last Seen** (\$12.00, Pocket). Now she has turned to fiction with two novels about a search and rescue tracker of Native American descent named Tally Nowata. In **Cry Last Heard**, the sequel to **Leave No Trace** (both \$6.99, Pocket), Tally is teamed with her lesbian best friend and fellow tracker Laney to respond to a distress call in the Grand Tetons. Soon they discover that the distress call was faked, and the hunters have become the hunted. The lesbian content is minimal (blink and you'll miss it), but the writing is extraordinary and the suspense never lets up. Unfortunately, Nyala brings back the villain from **Leave No Trace**, leaning heavily on the plot from the previous book, and he turns out to be an over-the-top psycho with a grudge against Tally. Tally's plight gets grimmer with each plot twist, till Nyala finally lost me. However, if psycho killers chill you without leaving you cold, these gripping wilderness adventures have the right stuff.



Unlikely as it sounds, African American author Mary Wilborn's **Naughty Little Secrets** is an attempt at a screwball mystery, a lesbian take-off on *The Thin Man*, set in New Jersey. Here husband-and-wife detective duo Nick and Nora have been transformed into interracial lesbian couple Slick and Laura. True to formula, Laura is a rich and powerful heiress, complete with mansion and old family retainers, and Slick is an ex-cop private detective. Through a grant from Laura's family foundation, they become involved with embezzlement and murder at a community theater. Thankfully, this version is not nearly as drenched in booze as the original, but neither is it nearly as sophisticated or dryly witty. *The Thin Man* (based on author Dashiell Hammett's real-life relationship with Lillian Hellman) is a perfect soufflé, light and airy. If it were easy to create such a masterpiece, none of us would be eating scrambled eggs. \$14.00, Kensington.

Veteran African American author Valerie Wilson Wesley has finally published a new Tamara Hayle mystery, called **Dying in the Dark**. This is the seventh in an excellent series about the Newark private investigator and (straight) single mom; the first was **When Death Comes Stealing** (\$6.99, Avon). In **Dying in the Dark**, Tamara investigates the death of an old high school friend, who turns out to have had a lesbian lover, as well as many ex-boyfriends. Meanwhile, Tamara's teenage son is growing up in a world that throws away African American youth, and he needs Tamara's help. \$22.95, One World.





One of my all-time favorite mystery writers, S.J. Rozan, has written a new non-series novel, **Absent Friends**, evoking New York City in the aftermath of September 11. When firefighter Jack McCaffery dies on 9/11, he becomes a media hero – until he is seemingly implicated in a twenty-year-old underworld murder. The large cast includes a tenacious woman reporter looking into the case, but (as far as I know) no lesbians. Rozan writes beautifully about New York, with love and precision, and reviews are already comparing the structure of the book to Dennis Lehane's *Mystic River* – so this is a must-read. \$24.00, Bantam. (For more on Rozan, see [BTWOF The](#)

[Lesbian Edition #5.](#))

Out lesbian author Sandra Scoppettone has declared the end of her sassy comic series featuring New York private eye Lauren Laurano, but many of us sorely miss it. (The first in that series, **Everything You Have is Mine** is now out of print – check library and used bookstores. The other titles, in series order, are: **I'll Be Leaving You Always**, \$6.50; **My Sweet Untraceable You**, out of print; **Let's Face the Music and Die**, \$6.50; **Gonna Take a Homicidal Journey**, \$6.99, all from Fawcett.) We've been waiting for more from Scoppettone for years, and now we have **Beautiful Rage**. In this non-lesbian crime novel, Virginia sheriff Lucia Dove is working on the case of a missing teenager. Scoppettone has been writing crime fiction since long before women detectives were fashionable, and she's very, very good at it. \$25.95, Five Star.



In **Grave Endings** by Orthodox Jewish author Rochelle Krich, the police ask true crime writer Molly Blume to identify a locket. The locket contains a red thread from Rachel's tomb in Jerusalem, which in Kabbalah tradition can ward off the evil eye. Molly gave that locket to her best friend Aggie, whose murder six years ago remains unsolved. In the midst of preparing for her Orthodox wedding (to a rabbi!), Molly is drawn into the investigation. **Grave Endings** is the third Molly Blume mystery, following **Blues in the Night** and **Dream House** (both \$6.99, Fawcett). Although there is no lesbian content, the Judaica, the Yiddish wisdom and

humor, and the Los Angeles details all add interest to a well-plotted mystery. \$24.95, Ballantine.



### Caught Reading

When we caught up with Emma Donoghue she'd just finished Marilynne (*Housekeeping*) Robinson's **Gilead** and had "a good weep" over it.



Jeanette Winterson has been reading **Wild Girls**, Diana Souhami's biography of Natalie Barney and Romaine Brooks. The two, of course, met in Paris in 1915, when they were both in their forties. Their relationship lasted, as I recall, until Natalie brought home one woman too many, some fifty years later. Both were as committed as any 70s feminist to inventing a life free of patriarchal limitations and laws.

**Wild Girls** was published in England this summer, but I haven't yet unearthed any plans to publish it here. You may have to order from one of your favorite British Booksellers: [Gay's the Word](#), [Silver Moon](#), or [Libertas](#). (£18.99, Weidenfeld & Nicolson, look for the paperback next July.) Find out what Winterson thinks about it at:

<http://www.jeanettewinterson.com/pages/content/index.asp?PageID=282>

What do witches read for Halloween? Starhawk was reading **Moral Politics**



by George Lakoff and **What's the Matter With Kansas** by Thomas Frank.

BTWOF caught up with Buddhist Beat poet Diane Di Prima recently. She had just reread Leonora Carrington's **The Hearing Trumpet** and was working her way through three volumes of Emily Dickinson's letters while also reading **Maitreya's: Distinguishing Phenomena and Pure Being** by Mipham.



## Awards and Prizes

### The Man Booker

Alan Hollinghurst unexpectedly won the Booker Prize for fiction for **The Line of Beauty**, a tale of young gay love and social criticism set in Thatcherite Britain. Colm Tobin's **The Master**, a novel about Henry James, was also on the shortlist.

For a tale of how the winner was chosen:

[http://www.economist.com/books/displayStory.cfm?story\\_id=3308497](http://www.economist.com/books/displayStory.cfm?story_id=3308497)

Carolyn Gage's play *Ugly Ducklings*, which considers the devastation caused by homophobia and lesbian-baiting at a girls summer camp, has been nominated for the American Theatre Critics Association/Steinberg New Play Award.

For more information:

<http://www.carolyngage.com/shows2.html>

### The Lammies Are in Motion

This year's Lambda Literary Awards will feature two new categories: Lesbian Fiction Debut and Gay Men's Fiction Debut, both of which will carry \$1000 prizes.

Suggestions and nominations for Lambda Literary Awards are still being accepted as we go to press. Anyone can suggest a book for consideration. Nominations require a \$20 administrative fee.

To suggest a title:

<http://www.lambdalit.org/Lammy/suggestionnew.html>

To nominate a title, or to check to see if your book has been nominated:

<http://www.lambdalit.org/lammy.html>

### Retreating

MacDowell isn't exactly an award – rather it's a gift of time and space to concentrate on a writing project. For Ms. Magazine's recent profile of the womanist roots of the MacDowell Colony:

<http://www.msmagazine.com/arts/2004-10-27-macdowell-colony.asp>



## Bookstore News

Charis Books and More (Atlanta) is turning 30. Women and Children First (Chicago) is turning 25.

Celebrate their birthdays in your own home: the next time you order books online, order from one of the birthday stores, instead of from a mega-institution. You'll get the books, help support one of our finest institutions, and invest in your own future.

For a brief history of the South's oldest feminist bookstore:

<http://www.southernvoice.com/2004/10-22/arts/feature/world.cfm>

Find Charis at:

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

For an interview with W&CF founders Ann Christophersen and Linda Bubon (both recently named to the *Chicago Sun-Times*' 100 most powerful women in the Chicago arts community):

<http://www.windycitymediagroup.com/gay/lesbian/news/ARTICLE.php?AID=6553c>

Find Women & Children First at:

<http://www.womenandchildrenfirst.com>

Herland, in Santa Cruz, closed on December 23 after a dozen years of providing, books, art, dances and, at times, a café, to the Santa Cruz women's community. Owner Kayla Rose has gone back to school to finish a degree in hypnotherapy. The Web site will stay live as a venue for continuing to sell her artwork:

<http://www.herland.50megs.com/>

Also in California: Sacramento's GLBTQ bookstore, The Open Book, is looking for "new owner(s) who can offer the necessary resources, enthusiasm and new and fresh ideas for a successful operation." Contact Ron or Larry at 916-498-1004 or <http://www.openbookltd.com/>.



### Writing Wanted

Scholastic Press editor David Levithan and young poet Billy Merrell are looking for writers ages 13 to 23, queer or not, for an anthology of personal nonfiction about today's queer teen experience. Deadline is Feb. 1. The book will be published by Knopf in Fall 2005.

Details at [www.queerthology.com](http://www.queerthology.com).



### Passages

#### Shirley Chisholm

Shirley Chisholm, the first black woman in Congress (1968-1982) and author of *Unbought and Unbossed*, died January 1 at 80. She also made history by running for president in 1972; she used her campaign to fight against racism, sexism, social injustice and the Vietnam War.

If Chisholm is not as well-known as other civil rights pioneers, it may be because of her refusal to compromise on important issues and her commitment to speaking truth to power, or, perhaps, simply because she was a pioneering woman. I was lucky enough to work on the Michigan branch of her presidential campaign; my girlfriend at the time ran as a Chisholm delegate in the primary where Chisholm won 5% of the vote and went into the nominating convention with 152 delegates.

Chisholm wrote, in *Unbought and Unbossed*, "Our representative democracy is not working because the Congress that is supposed to represent the voters does not respond to their needs. I believe the chief reason for this is that it is ruled by a small group of old men." As recently as 1982 she told the Associated Press: "I've always met more discrimination being a woman than being black. When I ran for the Congress, when I ran for president, I met more discrimination as a woman than for being black. Men are men."

PBS's *P.O.V.* will run "Chisholm 72: Unbought and Unbossed," Shola Lynch's documentary on Chisholm's campaign for the presidency, on February 7.

#### Susan Sontag

Novelist, essayist, critic, and one of America's leading intellectuals, Susan Sontag died December 28, from leukemia complications. She was 71. An activist who believed in "productive controversy," Sontag's 60s essay "Notes on Camp" and extended essay *Illness as Metaphor*, written following breast cancer and a mastectomy, established her as a prominent critic. Her other books included *On Photography*, *AIDS and Its Metaphors*, *The Volcano Lover*, and National Book Award winner *In America*. Sontag took on many a battle during her time – from the Vietnam War to the war in Iraq and the Ayatollah Khomeini when he called for writer Salman Rushdie's assassination.

And yet her death leaves considerable controversy in its wake, as lesbian and gay activists take the *New York Times*, the *Los Angeles Times*, and other media to task for stressing her very brief marriage to Philip Rieff (which took place 10 days after they met and ended in divorce 45 years ago) while neglecting to mention her long term relationships with dancer Lucinda Childs, American playwright Maria Irene Fornes, and her 20-year relationship with Annie Liebovitz.

The question seems not to be her relationships with women - Sontag had,

in recent years, referred to them as “an open secret” and said in published interviews that five of the nine times she’d been in love had been with women - but rather an incredible and bizarre prejudice that mandates that one cannot be both intellectual and lesbian, as if “intellectual” and “lesbian” were mutually exclusive categories, rather than two of many adjectives that can be used to describe someone, no more mutually exclusive that, say, “tall” and “striking” or “American” and “Black.”

And so we are seeing a rash of obituaries that deny that anyone as bright and sparkling and intelligent as Susan Sontag (read that as “attractive to men”) could have significant relationships with women. By writing extensively about Sontag’s brief marriage and ignoring all of her relationships with women, the media actively perpetuates that prejudice as does all of its unsolicited closeting of “the best and the brightest” of societies’ lesbian contributors.

Perhaps it’s time for someone to republish – as a memorial to Susan Sontag – that wonderful Chicago Women’s Graphic Collective poster that read, “You ask ‘Where is our Shakespeare?’ Her name was Sappho, and you burned her books.”

But Sontag may yet have the last word: At the time of her death, she was working on both a more personal book about pain and a collection of short stories. Both are expected to be published by Farrar, Straus & Giroux. May whoever finishes preparing them for publication take a wise and long view that honors the complexity of Susan Sontag’s life – including her love of women during deeply prejudicial times.

To read Paula Martinac on the cultural closeting of Susan Sontag:

<http://www.planetout.com/news/feature.html?sernum=1030>



That’s it for this issue.

We’ll be back soon with more good lesbian reading.



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