



In this issue...

News

- [Bywater Books Announces Lesbian Novel Contest](#)
- [Passages - Gloria Anzaldúa](#)
- [Amazon Moves](#)
- [Insight Out](#)

"Very Late May" 2004
Volume 1 Number 6

The Lesbian Edition

Dear Friends and Readers

It's been an exciting time here at BTWOF – we just put 250 Bookstore Display Kits in the mail to lesbian, feminist, gay, progressive, and general independent bookstores who've agreed to put up Books To Watch Out For displays in their stores during June/Gay Pride Month. We really appreciate their help (and yours!) in getting the word out about BTWOF. If you happen by a store with our display, please take a moment to thank the booksellers for displaying it. (And take a few subscription fliers for your friends.) Just look for our trademark Flying Bookie and the turquoise tablecloth. And if, perchance, you work in a bookstore and didn't get one, drop me an email and we'll send one right out!

Books

- [Find\(s\) of the Month](#)
- [More Great Reading](#)
- [Romance and Adventure](#)
- [Just Out in Paperback](#)
- [What They're Reading at Saints & Sinners](#)
- [What They're Reading at Antigone](#)
- [The Crime Scene](#)
- [The Publishing Triangle Award Winners Are...](#)
- [Printer-friendly version](#)

And BTWOF had a great time at both WiminFest, in Albuquerque, and Saints and Sinners, in New Orleans. We met many women at [WiminFest](#) who were still mourning the loss of Full Circle, Albuquerque's long-term feminist bookstore, and were glad to learn about BTWOF as a way to find books. It was a great adventure. And I'd heard so many wonderful things about last year's [Saints and Sinners LGBT Literary Festival](#) that I had to go check it out. Turns out they were all understatements: S&S was one of the friendliest, best run, yet relaxed, writers' conferences I've ever attended. (Or maybe I'm just a Northerner who hasn't spent enough time in the South?) And it manages to raise money for the New Orleans AIDS Taskforce. Awesome!



One of the most useful workshops, for BTWOF at least, was Ann Bannon and Karin Kallmaker's romance writing workshop. It's a genre I've never really "gotten" and, as a reviewer, I found it very helpful. I was lucky enough to moderate a panel on lesbian publishing and its unique history featuring an all-star cast: Ann Bannon, Jewelle Gomez, Katherine V. Forrest, and Karin Kallmaker. They told some wonderful stories. I only wish it had been videotaped and that I could stream it off the BTWOF web site.

And here's one of the most interesting things I learned at S&S:

Q: What was the second bestselling book in the USA in 1957?

A: Ann Bannon's *Odd Girls Out*, the first of the Beebo Brinker novels. Who knew?!

In 1957, the second bestselling novel in the country was, essentially, a lesbian novel. But by the late sixties, lesbian novels had virtually disappeared from the mainstream publishers' lists. By the mid-seventies publishers were still telling feminist bookstores that it would be "unprofitable" to publish good lesbian fiction. In the eighties, one of the leading gay (male) editors famously exclaimed (repeatedly, by some reports), "Who would be interested in what two women do?" How does our history get "lost" so quickly? (Or should I say "buried?" Or "disappeared?")

Odd Girls was part of the early wave of mass market novels – cheap, pocket-sized books printed on newsprint paper, that, unlike "regular" books (hardcovers), were meant to be read once, then thrown away. They made books available to everyone, not just the university few. And they were sold on spin racks in drug stores, train stations, and everywhere. (If only book distribution could be as effective today!) So there, in 1957, amid the other cheap new paperbacks, this interesting title, *Odd Girls Out*, with its

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.

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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 2004.

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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.



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interesting story, caught the eye of many, many readers – enough to make it the second bestselling book in the country. I guess that makes it the ultimate "crossover" success story. I wonder why no one seems to believe that kind of success is possible in today's world?

Odd Girls Out is currently in print from Cleis Press.



[back to top](#)

Bywater Announces Lesbian Novel Contest

Bywater Books (see [BTWOF #4](#)) is launching an annual contest for lesbian novels. Katherine V. Forrest will judge the contest the first year. First prize will be \$1000 and publication, second and third place winners will receive honorariums of \$200 and \$100 respectively. The contest is open to both published and unpublished authors. Deadline is December 31, 2004. Winners will be announced at the Saints & Sinners Literary Conference in May, 2005. Bywater Writing Contest, Bywater Books, P.O. Box 3671-48106, Ann Arbor, MI 48106. More details at <http://www.bywaterbooks.com/contest.html>.



[back to top](#)

Find(s) of the Month

Death in Reverse

"Lesbian literature" has a reputation for focusing on romance – finding and getting the gal. That's certainly important, but we also need stories about ongoing relationships, about the lives and relationships that build and grow over time. Those stories are much harder to find, but Ruth Schwartz explores this dimension and much more in her compelling memoir, **Death in Reverse**.



"One chilly blue morning in May, a surgeon angled a six-inch cut along my side, then reached in and removed my healthy right kidney. Four hours later, he spliced that kidney into my partner Ana's thigh, and her 'death in reverse' began."

And so it begins – a year of high hopes, medical complications, and the day-in and day-out effort of healing. A year of incalculable risk and enormous stress, both companions to the hope and dreams that began with a blithe promise: "If your sister can't do it (donate a kidney), I will." The tale is told, at times with a poet's vision, with a novelist's grace with flashbacks, and with wonderfully brave insights about how the experience changed both women, as well as their relationship, their expectations, and their dreams. Read it as a post-romance love story, as a meditation on the process and growth of loving, as a medical drama, as a West Coast Puerto Rican-Jewish love story, or just as a very useful book about medical complications of diabetes and/or organ transplant. It's all of that and more. \$19.95, Michigan State University Press.

Venus of Chalk



Susan Stinson's excellent novel **Venus of Chalk** is my other Find of the Month. Much loved for her *Fat Girl Dances with Rocks* and *Martha Moody*, Stinson once again takes lesbian literature in a totally unanticipated direction – the life of a lesbian...home economist. A cautious adventurer who is jolted out of her careful but beloved world by a troop of fat-and homo-phobic boys and into an unexpected adventure, Caroline is not exactly a Molly Bolt/*Rubyfruit Jungle* kind of gal, but she does have her own ways of moving through the world. I also loved Stinson's explorations of the kinds of



scrapes our pride and politics can generate and Caroline's (eventual) grace walking through them. \$14.95 Firebrand Books.

"Single-minded, indomitable Caroline is on a fast bus to Texas. This is one ride you won't want to miss." –Alison Smith
(*Name All the Animals*)



[back to top](#)

More Great Reading

Alison Smith's memoir, **Name All the Animals**, like Caroline Kraus's *Borderlines*, is a beautifully written, complex, insightful memoir of loss, grief and the reconstruction of the soul in their wake. But unlike Kraus' experience in *Borderlines*, Smith finds herself in love with a classmate at her Catholic girls' school and that loving is an inherent part of her healing. When she was 15, Alison Smith's beloved older brother, mentor, and best buddy died in an automobile accident. Six years in the writing, and selected as a Book Sense Top Ten pick, **Name All the Animals** explores grief in a deeply religious, working-class Catholic family, a girl's unnoticed and undiagnosed anorexia, the good intentions of teachers, writers whose books that make that vital difference (Jane Austen, Colette...), kisses stolen behind The Virgin's statue - and parents who miss it all, except for Alison's inability to continue to believe in a caring God in the face of so much loss. All of the secondary characters - including the lay teacher who assigned her the job of defending homosexual rights in a class debate and an aging nun who both taught young Alison to howl her frustrations into a laundry shoot, then tricked her into laughing again - are as richly portrayed as the central family. Smith is currently working on a novel and I, for one, can't wait. \$24, Scribner; \$26/Audio



"It was my idea to stay in the room. It was my idea to get under the covers. And once under, our feet slipping between the cold smoothness of the sheets, I put my arms around her. I felt a fluttering in her back, just above the shoulder blades, like two tiny wings. It was the first time I ever felt her tremble. Terry was experienced at misbehaving. She knew how much you could get away with. She knew when you had to stop. Her mistake was in trusting me, in making me, even on that one night, the night in the nun's bed, the moral compass. It wasn't because of what we did in that bed – not because, for the second time in our brief affair, she let me take off her shirt and, in turn, she took off mine – but because of what happened next. I supposed it would have been fine in the end and perhaps I would never have lost her, if it weren't for our one fatal mistake: her warm, solid body tucked into the curve of my own, we fell asleep."

For another review: <http://news.bookweb.org/features/2319.html>



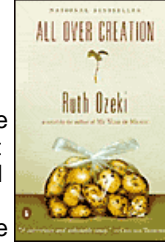
Speaking of lesbian pulps (as we were back at the beginning of this issue), Cleis Press has just republished **Spring Fire**, the 1952 paperback that started the whole lesbian pulp novel explosion. Written by Marijane Meaker (then writing as Vin Packer), it sold 1,500,000 copies – more than James Cain's *The Postman Always Rings Twice* and Daphne du Maurier's *My Cousin Rachel*, both published that year. Later, writing as Ann Aldrich, Meaker published the books I most want to see reprinted: five non-fiction accounts of lesbian life including

We, Too, Must Love, We Walk Alone, and Take a Lesbian to Lunch.

Meaker continued to write lesbian "pulp," mentored Ann Bannon and the Beebo Brinker books, and eventually turned to Young Adult fiction in the 70s (as M.E. Kerr), and published *Highsmith: A Romance of the 1950s* last year. She has to be the most prolific (out) lesbian writer ever! Every self-respecting lover of lesbians and lesbian history who hasn't yet found an old copy of

Spring Fire should drop everything and dive into our wicked, wonderful past and celebrate the women who had the courage and vision to start writing about lesbian life in the 1950s. \$12.95, Cleis Press.

Ruth Ozeki's **All Over Creation** is a wonderful novel about potatoes. Potatoes? About growing potatoes, about being a Japanese American kid growing up amidst the potato fields of Idaho, about the evil empire of genetically modified foods, about running away from home as a kid and returning to take care of one's own aging parents, about parenting, and about environmental actions and protests and protesters in a world where none of the expected heroes are exactly heroic, where friendship is a long term value, and where, despite the odds, there is hope and success. Who knew potatoes could be so much fun? Not a lesbian in sight, sadly, but still, lots of fellow travelers. It's a great and sustaining read. \$14.00, 400 pages, Penguin. You might also want to check out Ozeki's earlier novel, *My Year of Meats*. \$14.95, Viking.



"*All Over Creation* opens wider with every plot twist as it moves from tenderness to comedy to sobering truth and the whole world in the eye of one family's storm. This is Edward Abbey's *The Monkey Wrench Gang* updated by thirty years, with modern environmental challenges on the map and women in the front seat, driving the story." -Barbara Kingsolver (*The Poisonwood Bible*)

"With a natural storyteller's ability to communicate both the hilarious and profound, Ozeki writes about love and sex, bioengineering and social responsibility, deftly communicating her uncanny feel for the texture of contemporary American life." – Paula Sharp (*Crows Over a Wheatfield*)



[back to top](#)

Romances and Adventure Tales

I'd looked forward to Lyn Denison's **Dreams Found** for months. I wanted the promised story of an Australian dyke's journey to find and meet her birth mother, Maggie. OK, I knew there was going to be a romance in the picture but I didn't expect it to eclipse the more unique story about a dyke establishing *this* new relationship with her just-found birth mother.... That said, it was a good, easy read - a good bit of escapism with nicely complex dramas and interesting, well drawn characters and some lovely bits of humor. But now I want to know how all these interesting new relationships would affect Maggie and how she might cope with the inevitable ups and downs and bits of familial conflicts– now *that* would be an interesting story, too, but I guess it wouldn't be a romance! Denison's previous novels include *The Wild One*, *Dream Lover*, *Gold Fever*, and *Silver Threads*. \$12.95, Bella Books.



Wizard of Isis is the fifth novel in Jean Stewart's Isis series. Set in a post-plague America divided into Elysium, a worst-case scenario of right-wing politics gone mad, in the east, and a women's near-utopia Freeland, in the west. (Well, as near to utopia as you can get with Elysium invasions.) The **Wizard of Isis** begins with Tomyris Whitaker and Danu Sullivan's crash landing after chasing two Elysian jets back across the border. Both, luckily, are found by a renegade band of amazons surviving between the (growing) cracks in the Elysium clerics' control. But things get worse when an ill-planned rescue mission goes awry. The science fiction is bumpy at times, the mix of science and magic sometimes inconsistent, but it's a good adventure read, though probably not for hard-core science fiction readers. A good prologue and glossary and character list help readers new to the series catch up with the details of this five-book series. \$12.95, Bella Books.



[back to top](#)

Just Out in Paperback

In Naked in the Promised Land, Lillian Faderman writes of growing up as the bastard daughter of her much loved and Holocaust-scarred mother, of her dreams of becoming an actress (which would, somehow, enable her to “save” and care for her mother), of working her way through college as a burlesque dancer, of her fascinations with and attractions to women, and, finally, of a fully realized career as a lesbian-feminist academic in deeply satisfying lover and parenting relationships. It’s a fascinating ride and a compelling memoir. \$19.95 paperback, University of Wisconsin Press.

"Who'd have thought a professor's life could be such a gripping page-turner?" –Emma Donoghue

[back to top](#)

What Were They Reading at Saints & Sinners?

“What are you reading?” **Books To Watch Out For** asked all the writers in the courtyard, one afternoon at the [Saints & Sinners](#) writers conference. And they replied:

Ann Bannon, true to form, gave us an entire dissertation’s worth of great books:

I just bought Kathy’s (Katherine Forrest’s) book, **Hancock Park** - it’s a Kate Delafield mystery, and I can’t wait!

I recently read Monique Truong’s **Book of Salt**, which I liked very much, and Nina Revoyr’s **Southland**, which I also liked....

And **As Meat Loves Salt**, by Maria McCann. It’s a 17th century adventure story and she did a great job. It’s interesting that two of the women authors I liked best, the two **Salts**, both had gay male characters at their centers.....

Last year I read Kathy Forrest’s **Daughters of an Amber Noon**, Trebor Healey’s **Through It Came Bright Colors**, and Christopher Bram’s **Lives of the Circus Animals**. And Lillian Faderman’s *wonderful* new memoir **Naked in the Promised Land**.

I read a lot of history, so I’m reading a Samuel Pepys biography and thinking about the 17th century - and I’m trying to catch up with Harry Potter before the next one comes out. There’s another wonderful children’s series, **His Dark Materials**, by Philip Pullman. It’s kind of a countermeasure to the Narnia series which is so infused with Christian mythology.... Pullman’s series is very skeptical and has quite an edge to it, so that’s been interesting too.

T Cooper

I’m reading Vendela Vida’s book, **And Now You Can Go**. It’s a novel about a woman who is almost either raped or killed in Riverside Park in New York and survives, so the book is about her survival and her relations with men and women in the aftermath of that attack. And I just finished a book about Bix Beiderbecke. He was just an amazing horn blower and his family totally ostracized him because it was so low-brow to play with black musicians.... He’s one of my favorite jazz musicians. Yeah! It’s quite a story....

I’m doing a ton of research for my next novel, so I’m reading a lot of Jewish immigrant fiction from the 20s and 10s. I just finished *The Fixer*, by Bernard Malamud, a great novel.

Felicia Luna Lemus

Lynn Mally’s **Revolutionary Acts: Amateur Theater and the Soviet State** is this amazing book about the cultural revolution within Bolshevik Russia. It has a lot of information about youth culture and the agitprop brigades and how they would infiltrate factories and force people to listen to propaganda type plays. That’s for the next project I’m working on. And I’ve been reading a lot about Luisa Capetillo, a revolutionary anarchist figure in the 1920s. She was one of the first women to walk around in pants. She worked in a cigar

factory and she was a reader, a position that was usually reserved for men, and basically she would sit up on a platform and read to the factory workers as they were working.

Katherine Forrest

I've just finished Margaret Atwood's **Oryx and Crake**, and I'm just about to start **The Wire in the Blood** by Val McDermid. It was made into a BBC miniseries with a fabulously intriguing central character who's a forensic psychotherapist. But mostly I'm reading and editing manuscripts right now.

Susan Stinson

At this very moment I'm reading *Dish It Up Baby* by Kristy Helms. I just finished *Famous Builder* by Paul Lisicky. It's a wonderful memoir. He brought a kind of reverent eye to the culture of the suburbs – it's kind of amazing.

Jim Tushinski

I'm reading a novel by Jean Thompson called **City Boy**. Thompson is a phenomenal novelist/short story writer. She was nominated for National Book Award a couple of years ago. And next in line is Edmund White's **Fanny**.

Felice Picano

I'm just reading, for the first time, **The Ballad of the Sad Café and Other Stories** by Carson McCullers. I'd never read it - it's been sitting around for years. And the horrible reason I brought it with me? Because it was the lightest and smallest book in my collection. I'm just amazed by it and loving it.

Val McDermid

Richard Yates' **The Easter Parade**, mostly because one of my friends has been nagging me to read him for years. And I finally got 'round to picking it up. I started reading it a couple of nights ago, and I'd expected something much more difficult to get into but it's just a wonderfully easy glide into the lives of these characters. I can't believe I never read it before.

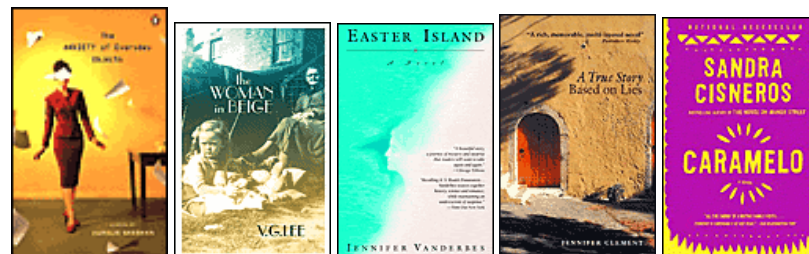
The thriller I've enjoyed the most this year is Mo Hayder's third novel, **Tokyo**. I had a bit of trepidation about it because the first two novels were terribly violent, but this book was quite different. It's so exciting to see a writer move up a gear – to find a whole new way of expressing herself. When it comes to harrowing your readers, less is more, and the more you leave to your reader's imagination, the scarier it actually is. The writing is powerful, the sense of place wonderful. I really got into that book, the way a book stays with you for a long time.



[back to top](#)

What They're Reading at Antigone

Each issue BTWOF asks the staff at a different women's bookstore what they're reading and what they're loving. This issue we asked the gals at Antigone what women are reading in Tucson. Here's what they said:



We're going to plug two new books of two local authors first: Aurelie Sheehan's debut novel, **The Anxiety of Everyday Objects**, is an original and witty tale about the tension between creative yearnings and duty to the daily grind. The book's main character, Winona Bartlett, works as a

secretary at a New York City law firm. Though she finds a certain security in the rituals of her demandingly undemanding job, her ambition is to be a filmmaker. When a new lawyer joins the firm, Winona is challenged and inspired to follow her creative impulses. \$14.00, Penguin.

Amy Weintraub has written a very important book, **Yoga for Depression**, which offers yoga practice as a path to mental wellness and as an alternative to prescription drugs. "**Yoga for Depression** is a godsend: beautifully written, medically accurate, and very practical. I highly recommend it!" Christiane Northrup, M.D., author of **Women's Bodies, Women's Wisdom**. \$14.95, Broadway Books.

Other great books:

The Way the Crow Flies by Ann-Marie MacDonald is one of our favorites—especially among those who can tolerate the dark side of life! I won't go into detail since it was mentioned extensively in the last issue. Just read it; it's great! \$26.95, HarperCollins. (Trudy and Cheryl)

Woman in Beige, V.G. Lee. This second novel by the author of *The Comedienne* made me laugh all over again. Her novels are witty, a bit poignant and very British (in word use and general feel). This one is about a 38-year-old lesbian named Lorna Tree, deliverer of newspapers and writer of epic poems. It also stars Pat, pathetic excuse for a best friend and owner of Harry the Goldfish; parents George and Della who are not, and have never been "kiddy people;" next door neighbors the E's and their giant albino rabbit; and the woman in beige herself: sexy, mysterious, and no respecter of the law. This author isn't the best at writing endings, but besides that I laughed a lot and enjoyed the book very much. \$13.95, Diva. (Kate)

Easter Island by Jennifer Vanderbes is coming in paper in June. I strongly recommend *Easter Island* to fans of Andrea Barrett, as it combines a great story with science and history. In 1912, Elsa Pendleton's father dies and leaves her to care for her 19-year-old sister, Alice. Out of necessity, Elsa marries the kindly Edward Beazley, a contemporary of her father's who is an anthropologist with the Royal Geographical Society in England. They travel to Easter Island, where Edward plans to study the giant moai sculptures. But it is Elsa who truly comes to life on Easter Island when she becomes engrossed in unlocking the meaning of the symbols on wooden tablets. In a parallel narrative, Greer Farraday, a young American botanist recovering from a disastrous marriage to an older professor, arrives on the island in 1973 to uncover the mystery of the island's lack of native trees. She, too, discovers much about herself in the process. Elsa's and Greer's stories play out in alternating sections, and we watch with fascination as two very different women from two very different historical periods grow and change. \$13, Dell. (Trudy)

True Story Based on Lies by Jennifer Clement. I picked this book based on the beautiful cover and intriguing title and was rewarded with a powerful, lyrical tale. Set in contemporary Mexico, this book addresses the universal issues of class discrimination, male oppression and female servitude through dual narratives of spellbinding power. The simple lilting prose-poetry belies a dark complexity hidden below the surface and draws the reader on to the book's chilling conclusion. \$12, Canongate Books(Cheryl)

In Buddha's Kitchen: Cooking and Being Cooked at a Meditation Center, Kimberly Snow.

This is a short memoir of a woman who moved back and forth between academia and commercial kitchens, "always leaving, never staying to work it out," until she went to a Tibetan retreat center. When the center's cook had to leave unexpectedly, Kimberly Snow stepped in and took over the kitchen. She ended up staying for several years.

She is a terrific storyteller who can evoke vivid pictures of chaotic kitchens as well as rigid academic environments, but when her story settles in the kitchen at the retreat center and her experience of the dharma deepens, she is sometimes profoundly funny. This is a short book and such fun to read that you may stay up too late in order to find out how it all ends. \$18.95, Shambhala. (Colby)

Caramelo, by Sandra Cisneros. I loved this lively, interestingly crafted novel by Sandra Cisneros, who also wrote **The House on Mango Street**. Cisneros

paints the lives of the extended family Reyes with vibrant words and vivid characterizations. Told in the voice of the youngest granddaughter, the story begins as the family (three brothers plus wives and children) leave their homes in Chicago to trek to Mexico City, home of their revered mother, also known as "The Awful Grandmother." I highly recommend this excellent book. 13.95, Vintage/Random House. (Kate)

Many thanks to Trudy, Kate, Cheryl and Colby and to all the women at Antigone for their help and for all the work they do to support our community. You can find Antigone at 411 North 4th Avenue, Tucson, AZ 85705 . Phone: 520-792-3715. Or at www.antigonebooks.com. There's a current list of women's bookstores at www.litwomen.org/WIP/stores.html.



[back to top](#)

The Crime Scene

By Nan Cinnater

Like everything else, publishing has its seasons, and this is apparently lesbian mystery season. There are private eyes and lady dicks galore! We begin with several debut lesbian mysteries; then we look at some new books by old friends and other surprises.

Packing Mrs. Phipps by Anne Seale (\$13.95, Alyson) is one wild road trip. Jobless home health aide Jo Jacuzzi is hired to help elderly Mrs. Phipps make her annual spring migration from Florida to Buffalo. Naturally curious and friendly, Jo gets sidetracked into an RV trip to New Mexico and a plot involving murder, four million dollars, stolen art, a scary civilian militia, and various forms of male violence. Memorable characters abound, notably a battered wife named Aggie, and Jo's mom, who lives with a woman lover. Not everything Jo does makes sense, but the plot unfolds with the momentum of the road, and it turns out to be a hell of a ride.

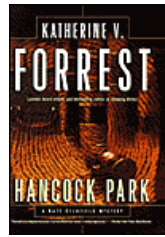


Caught in the Net, by Jessica Thomas (\$12.95, Bella Books), features Alex Peres, a private investigator in Provincetown. Her unofficial helpers are a black lab named Fargo and a police officer named Sonny, who is Alex's brother. When Fargo finds a sneaker on the beach that still has a human foot in it, Alex calls the cops...but that doesn't keep her out of the loop. In fact, Alex leaves most of the investigating to the police, while she's busy romancing new-girl-in-town Janet Meacham. **Caught in the Net** is a perfect beach read, especially for a Cape Cod beach. But it's not a

very tangled mystery and it's not a very evocative depiction of unique and beautiful Provincetown.

I guess it's inevitable that someone would set a lesbian mystery in Asheville, NC -- another unique and beautiful gay-friendly town. **There Came Two Angels** (\$13.95, Alyson) by Julia Lieber introduces former homicide detective Loy Lombard, now in the private security business. When Republican Senator Jasper Slade is found with a dead gay man in his bed, Lombard would love to get a piece of the biggest murder case in ages. That's why she's willing to take as a client the right-wing American Family Freedom Campaign, a group who want to prove the senator was set up by gay activists. Instead, Lombard uncovers enough dead bodies, disappearances, and double crosses to make Raymond Chandler proud. Lieber offers engaging writing and superior plotting, but not much political sophistication. (Personally, I'm shocked, shocked, to discover that conservative politicians are hypocrites and liars....)





As for the old-timers, Katherine V. Forrest is back with her first lesbian mystery in many years! Forrest explores dysfunctional family values among the wealthy in the gated community of **Hancock Park** (\$22.95, Berkley). When LA homicide detective Kate Delafield investigates the murder of matron Victoria Talbot, all evidence points to the ex-husband. The DA moves quickly to trial. But there are surprises in store as the courtroom drama unfolds. Forrest's

marvelous series about ultra-professional, privately vulnerable Kate Delafield began with **Amateur City** (\$12.95, Alyson--See BTWOF, Issue #3).

I hope Claire McNab had a lot of fun writing **The Wombat Strategy** (\$13.95, Alyson), because I certainly had a great time reading it. One may wonder why McNab, with two other lesbian suspense series still going strong, would want to launch a new heroine. The answer is that this heroine, displaced Aussie-in-LA Kylie Kendall, is a hoot! McNab takes this opportunity to send up all things LA, notably luxury SUV's, trendy therapies, and the ubiquitous movie biz. McNab also pokes some fun at Oz along the way: Kylie comes from a town called Wollegudgerie, known as "the Gudge," and she sprinkles her conversation with such incomprehensible Aussie-isms as "What's the good oil?" and "That'd be bonzer!" Since this is McNab, the plotting and pace are impeccable. Better yet, **The Wombat Strategy** is funny, fresh, and, oddly enough, even more Australian than McNab's other series.



Note that Claire McNab's other heroines are alive and well at Bella Books. Super-competent secret agent Denise Cleever goes undercover as a clinical psychologist at an ominous private retreat in **Death by Death** (\$12.95). And those who want to begin at the beginning can meet Detective Inspector Carol Ashton on her very first case in the too-long-out-of-print **Lessons in Murder** (\$12.95).

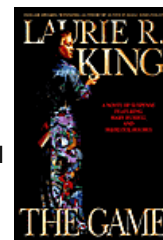


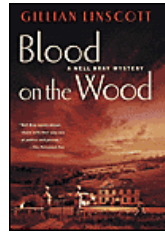
Three-time Lambda Award-winner Ellen Hart is in good form in **An Intimate Ghost** (\$24.95, St. Martin's/ Minotaur), her new mystery featuring restaurateur Jane Lawless and sidekick Cordelia Thorn. The mystery unfolds through multiple narratives about a kidnapping in Kansas thirty years ago and a recent incident of high school gun violence. Jane gets involved when a wedding catered by her restaurant devolves into chaos because the food has been spiked with hallucinogenic mushrooms. Meanwhile Cordelia, stuck with

the care of her eighteen-month-old niece, decides it's never too early to play Auntie Mame. Will Jane's love life get a jump start from major babe Kenzie Nelson? Will Cordelia survive life with a toddler? In spite of Hart's intricate plotting and convincing psychological motivations, these are the questions that really keep us turning the pages.

Versatile Laurie R. King has written two series and a number of stand-alone novels with complex, intelligent heroines. Unfortunately, her series about lesbian cop Kate Martinelli, which began with **A Grave Talent** (\$6.99, Bantam), has been stalled for a few years. The good news is that she has an excellent new entry in the Mary Russell/Sherlock Holmes series. Beginning with **The Beekeeper's Apprentice** (\$6.99, Bantam), Laurie R. King continued--and reinvented--the Sherlock Holmes saga. At their best, these books work for both Sherlockians and feminists because they focus on Mary Russell, a young woman who is just as brilliant, determined, and fascinating as Holmes himself.

More picaresque adventure than mystery, King's latest, **The Game** (\$23.95, Bantam), is very much an homage to Rudyard Kipling who dubbed espionage "the great game." On a mission for British intelligence in 1923, Holmes and Russell travel through India disguised as a pair of itinerant magicians. The sights, sounds, tastes, and smells of colonial India are wonderfully evoked, as well as the thrill of early aviation, the wisdom of Tibetan Buddhism, and a few magician's secrets. Not bad for a light entertainment.





Another great find for feminists is Gillian Linscott's **Blood on the Wood** (\$24.95, St. Martin's/Minotaur). Linscott's series about British suffragette Nell Bray is a well-kept secret in this country, probably because it has never been published in paperback. In **Blood on the Wood**, the late socialist Philomena Venn has bequeathed to the Suffragettes a valuable painting, which Nell is commissioned to retrieve from the Venn estate. Nell is soon up to her newly bobbed hair in a case involving forgery, murder, Fabians, Scipians, the Arts and Crafts Movement, and folk music--all of the elements of British Bohemianism ca. 1920.

In spite of her goofy name, Fritillary Quilter is a gal worth getting to know. Not explicitly lesbian, Fritillary (rhymes with Hillary) is way too interested in her work and, frankly, other people's lives, to have time for romance. Fritillary is an arson investigator in Shelley Reuben's new mystery, **Weeping** (13.99, Kate's Mystery Books/Justin, Charles & Co.). Reuben, herself a long-time arson investigator, knows a lot about fires but dispenses that knowledge somewhat sparingly. She is lavish, however, with the depth and detail of her characters, especially her heroine. (If "Kate's Mystery Books" sounds familiar, it's probably because you know the bookstore by that name in Cambridge, Mass., or if you're really lucky, the bookstore's owner, mystery maven Kate Mattes. Yes, this is her venture into publishing.)

You don't have to be a mystery maven or even a radio aficionado to be endlessly entertained by **Private Eyelashes**, Jack French's history of lady detectives in the golden age of radio. (\$18.95 plus \$2.00 postage from www.bearmanormedia.com.) French compiles great gossip and trivia about Hollywood's most glamorous (and bisexual) stars, such as Mercedes McCambridge, who played the title character in "Defense Attorney," and even Marlene Dietrich, who played (what else?) an international crime fighter in "Time for Love." With fascinating facts about the origins of these radio dramas in movies, mystery novels, and comic books, and tantalizing bits of dialogue, **Private Eyelashes** is chock full of tough broads, fast-talking dames, and sexy sweethearts.



[back to top](#)

Passages - Gloria Anzaldúa

Gloria Anzaldúa, one of the most inspiring visionaries of the women's movement, died unexpectedly, apparently in her sleep from diabetes-related complications, during the week of May 16. She was 61 years old.

One of the first openly lesbian Chicana authors, Gloria played a major role in redefining contemporary Chicano/a and lesbian/queer identities and in developing an inclusive feminist movement. Her warmth and vision – and playfulness – will be sorely missed by all who knew her in person or in print.

She was born in the Rio Grande Valley of south Texas in 1942, did migrant work when needed by her family after her father died, received her B.A. from Pan American University, her M.A. from the University of Texas, Austin, and was completing her doctorate at the University of California, Santa Cruz. She was within weeks of completing her dissertation and was planning to publish volumes of her poetry and short stories in the near future.

Best known for *Borderlands/La Frontera: The New Mestiza* (named one of the 100 Best Books of the Century by both *Hungry Mind Review* and *Utne Reader*) and beloved for *This Bridge Called My Back: Writings by Radical Women of Color* (co-edited with Cherríe Moraga in 1981), Gloria's more recent work includes *this bridge we call home: radical visions for transformation* (co-edited with AnaLouise Keating), *Making Face, Making Soul/Haciendo Caras: Creative and Critical Perspectives by Feminists-of-Color*, two bilingual children's books - *Friends from the Other Side/Amigos del otro lado* and *Prietita and the Ghost Woman/Prietita y la Llorona*, and *Interviews/Entrevistas* as well as numerous uncollected essays, stories, and poems....

Her awards include the Before Columbus Foundation American Book Award, the Lambda Small Book Press Award, an NEA Fiction Award, the Lesbian Rights Award, the Sappho Award of Distinction, and the American Studies Association Lifetime Achievement Award.

Gloria's sister Hilda and co-editor AnaLouise Keating have established The Gloria Anzaldúa Memorial Fund. Funds will be used for funeral-related expenses and to establish a legacy in Gloria's name. To contribute, send a check to the Gloria Anzaldúa Memorial Fund, Elsa State Bank, PO Box 397, Elsa, TX 78543

Public memorials and altars are being created around the country. Friends have also created a web altar where friends can post messages, memories, and share their grief.

<http://www.gloria.chicanas.com/>

There's more information at:

<http://www.gloria.chicanas.com/keatingobit.html>



[back to top](#)

Amazon Moves

Amazon Bookstore has moved to their spiffy new digs: 4755 Chicago Ave. S., Minneapolis, MN 55407. Phone number (612-821-9630), email and [web site](#) all stay the same.



[back to top](#)

Insight Out Looking for a Few Good Members

Insight Out Book Club is looking for a few (more) good readers - about 10,000 of them - to join the club, buy books (of course), and help them make the leap into profitability. It's the first gay book club to survive more than a few months and is one of dozens of mail-order clubs under the Bookspan umbrella. BTWOF believes the best and first place to buy books is always at your local independent – preferably lesbian, feminist, or gay bookstore. But it's a great resource for people who don't have a local store. It doesn't have every gay book, but it does offer some interesting, exclusive reprints of out-of-print classics. The deal is you get four books for \$1 each (plus shipping) for joining and you agree to buy 3 books over the next two years. Check it out at www.insightoutbooks.com.



[back to top](#)

The Publishing Triangle Award Winners Are...

Finalists for the Ferro-Grumley Awards for Fiction: Men

* **Trebor Healey**, *Through It Came Bright Colors* (Harrington Park)

Christopher Bram, *Lives of the Circus Animals* (William Morrow)

John Rowell, *The Music of Your Life* (Simon & Schuster)

Finalists for the Ferro-Grumley Award for Fiction: Women

* **Nina Revoyr**, *Southland* (Akashic)

Alison Bechdel, *Dykes and Sundry Other Carbon-Based Life-Forms to Watch Out For* (Alyson)

Rebecca Brown, *The End of Youth* (City Lights)

Finalists for the Randy Shilts Award for Gay Nonfiction

* **John D'Emilio, *Lost Prophet: The Life and Times of Bayard Rustin***

(Free Press)

Augusten Burroughs, *Dry* (St. Martin's)

Dale Peck, *What We Lost* (Houghton Mifflin)

Finalists for the Judy Grahn Award for Lesbian Nonfiction

* **Lillian Faderman, *Naked in the Promised Land*** (Houghton Mifflin)

Casey Charles, *The Sharon Kowalski Case: Lesbian and Gay Rights on Trial*
(University Press of Kansas)

Andrew Wilson, *Beautiful Shadow: A Life of Patricia Highsmith* (Bloomsbury USA)

Finalists for the Publishing Triangle Award for Gay Male Poetry

* **Brian Teare, *The Room Where I Was Born*** (University of Wisconsin Press)

Patrick Donnelly, *The Charge* (Ausable Press)

Peter Pereira, *Saying the World* (Copper Canyon Press)

Finalists for the Audre Lorde Award for Lesbian Poetry

* **Daphne Gottlieb, *Final Girl*** (Soft Skull Press)

Marilyn Hacker, *Desesperanto* (W.W. Norton)

Minnie Bruce Pratt, *The Dirt She Ate* (University of Pittsburgh Press)



And that's it for this issue!

See you next month.

Carol Seajay

for *Books To Watch Out For*



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