

More Books for Women

Print It Out

-Premiere Issue-
Fall 2005

- [PDF of this issue](#)

In This Issue...

- Welcome
- Ann Christophersen
- Linda Bubon
- Pam Harcourt
- Tish Hayes
- Mysteries
- Until Next Issue...

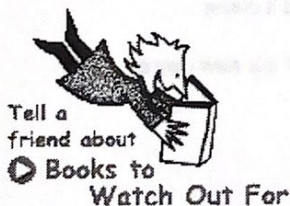
Dear Lesbian Edition Subscriber,

Here's a bonus issue for you - the Premiere Edition of **More Books For Women!** Long a gleam in my eye, **More Books For Women** springs from a partnership with the staff of Women & Children First in Chicago. They'll select and review 25-30 "general women's interest" titles each month for your reading pleasure. I'll be adding news and updates from the women's book community and the larger publishing world. We see **More Books For Women** as a great complement to **The Lesbian Edition of Books To Watch Out For.**

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Are there folks on your holiday gift list who'd enjoy a subscription? Go to that subscription page right now and sign them up!

Now that **More Books For Women** is launched, and the tech demons in the 3-month free trial issue program are tamed, we'll get back to publishing **The Lesbian Edition** on its regular schedule.



Thanks for your support,
Carol

Welcome to the Premiere Issue of More Books for Women

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.

More Books for Women

covers the finest in thinking women's reading, plus mysteries, non-sexist children's books, and news from women's publishing. Written by the owners and staff at Women & Children First, and friends.

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The Lesbian Edition

covers both lesbian books and the whole range of books lesbians like

Books To Watch Out For is delighted to be partnering with Chicago's world-class women's bookstore, Women & Children First, to launch our new book review, **More Books for Women.** With **More Books For Women** it's easy to find the best in women's reading.

Each issue of **More Books for Women** features 25-30 exciting titles to pique your interest plus a mysteries column, a short list of great new books for children and young adults, and news about women's books and publishing.

- Women & Children First owners and staff, Ann Christophersen, Linda Bubon, Pam Harcourt, and Tish Hayes, select and review the core collection of books for each issue. Consummate readers all, they've been in the business of providing books to discerning readers for 25 years.
- Nan Cinnater, whose "Crime Scene" column has been published in *Feminist Bookstore News*, *Sojourner* and, most recently, *The Lesbian Edition* of Books To Watch Out For, offers a collection of excellent mysteries.

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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Send books for review consideration for **More Books For Women** and **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
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Perth, ON K7H 2J3
Canada.



- BTWOF publisher Carol Seajay, formerly publisher of *Feminist Bookstore News*, keeps you up to date with the latest news about women's books and publishing.

More Books for Women is the third publication to launch under the Books To Watch Out For umbrella. It's been a gleam in our eye since we launched **The Lesbian Edition** and **The Gay Men's Edition** two years ago. Books To Watch Out For reviews make it easy to find the books that give you the best return for your scarce reading hours.

And to make it easy to get the books, in this era when so many independent bookstores have closed, we're including an online ordering option. Readers can click through to order any of the featured books via Women & Children First's secure web site. Or you can print the issue and take it to your local bookstore or library.

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- Or join our community of women who have pledged \$25-\$100 per month for 12 months to help finance More Books for Women's launch year. For more information please email me directly, mailto:CarolSeajay@BooksToWatchOutFor.com.

And please tell your friends and colleagues about **More Books for Women** and our other publications. Use the [Tell-A-Friend](#) button in the left column (under the table of contents) to send a copy of this issue to your friends. Or tell them to go to <http://www.btwof.com/samples.php> to read it online

Thank you for your enthusiasm for this new publication, and this new way of spreading the word about women's books and literature.

Carol Seajay
Publisher, Books To Watch Out For

Ann Christophersen is reading...

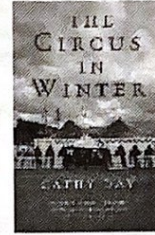
Alison Lurie's Pulitzer-prize winner, *Foreign Affairs*, has one of the best endings I've ever read (I'm a big fan of strong endings, which are often hard to find in otherwise very good novels). *Truth and Consequences*, her new novel just coming out in October, is also a marvel in that regard. But it's all that happens between beginning and ending that made this book wonderful. It's about a woman who eventually throws off the conventions of being good and nice and thinking of everyone else first (particularly her ailing, demanding husband) and the quixotic position her ostensibly convention-free husband finds himself in at the end. (\$24.95, Viking Books)



Times Like These, by Rachel Ingalls, is a book I've been waiting for —not necessarily this collection of stories — just anything by Ingalls. I'd read her quirky, fascinating novel, *Mrs. Caliban*, published 15 years ago and various collections of stories sprinkled over the intervening years, all of them with great attention and pleasure. It has been awhile since this wholly unique writer of rather dark, eerie, droll stories has made an offering. I am grateful for this one. (*Times Like These*, \$16, Graywolf; *Mrs. Caliban*, \$12.95, Harvard Common Press)



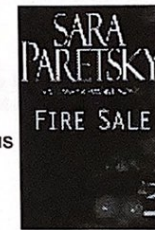
Speaking of short stories, a collection of interconnected stories that I liked very much is Cathy Day's *The Circus in Winter* which was nominated for this year's National Book Awards. It is set in the town (a real one, but fictionalized here) that was the wintering quarters of a major circus in the heyday of traveling big tops. She vividly captures the feel of small, Midwestern towns and gives her reader a behind-the-scenes look at the daily escapades of the people who lived the life. I'd call it a fictional ethnography, with the emphasis on fictional: Day very skillfully creates her characters and pulls the various storylines together in very artful ways. (\$13, Harcourt)



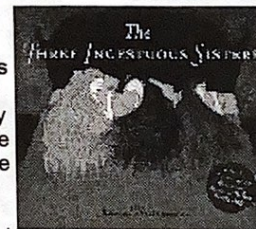
I wouldn't normally contribute a book by a male writer to this column, but journalist J. R. Moehringer's *The Tender Bar* is an exception worth making. It is a beautifully written memoir of a young man finding his way toward adulthood in the embrace of some very colorful characters in a neighborhood bar. He starts hanging out there when he is too young to do so legally and he ends up drinking too much there when he is older, which becomes a problem. But that's not really what this story is about. It's about the people in his life, the tenderness they share, and the men he looks to in his self-conscious struggle for manhood. But, in the end it's his mother who is the hero of his story — and she's a terrific character. (\$23.95, Hyperion)



Sara Paretsky's *Fire Sale*, the newest in her V.I. Warshawsky series, is terrific. She brings her usual mix of progressive politics, great characters, fast-paced adventure — and excellent writing. This one opens with V.I. almost being blown-up when a manufacturing plant on Chicago's South Side explodes and sends debris hurling her way. Thus begins an intricate journey to unraveling the strands of intersecting circumstances and clues as the plot moves briskly along. (\$25.95, Putnam)



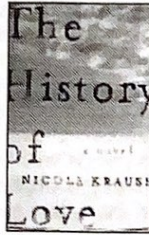
Audrey Niffenegger of *The Time Traveler's Wife* fame is really an artist: novel-writing is her second career. Her new book, *Three Incestuous Sisters*, is her first novel-in-pictures, a collection of related prints that, along with text, tell the story of three sisters, two of them in love with the same man and the other in love with a baby about to be born. The pictures are absolutely beautiful and the tale is haunting. The book is most amazingly priced at \$27.95. Everyone should at least look at this book and read the narrative. I have to warn you, though: once you've done so, you'll want a copy of your own. (*Three Incestuous Sisters*, \$27.95, Harry N. Abrams; *The Time Traveler's Wife*, \$14, Harvest/HBJ)



Barbara Ehrenreich's new book, *Bait & Switch: The (Futile) Pursuit of the American Dream*, is a worthy follow-up to *Nickel & Dimed*. As a result of many stories she heard about a new commonplace in the American workforce — downsizing and the displacement of white-collar workers — she decided to investigate what it was like for people who had played by the middle-class rules (gone to college, gotten "a good job," made a good living) — only to find that the supposedly firm ground under their feet had quite suddenly shifted to drifting sand. As with anything Ehrenreich writes, *Bait & Switch* is well worth reading for her unique insights and her great wit. (*Bait*, \$24, Metropolitan Books; *Nickel and Dimed*, \$13, Owl)



Linda Bubon suggests...

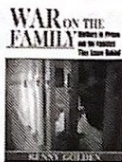


Nicole Krauss' **The History of Love** is a stunning, achingly tender novel written in two voices: an old man who is a Holocaust survivor and a 14-year-old Jewish girl. The voices are so real, so distinctive, that the characters walked off the page and into my mind and heart. There's an engaging plot, too, concerning a lost book that creates a life of literary fame for one man, hope for its young reader, and resolution for its true author. (\$23.95, Norton)



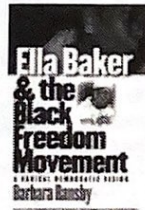
A Complicated Kindness (new in paper) is a darkly comic novel about a teen girl living in a small Canadian town in a strict Mennonite community. Her grief over her mother's and sister's leaving (they are shunned by the Elder) is palpable, her rage and acting-out understandable, and her loyalty to her passive, schoolteacher father endearing. Miriam Toews offers us a voice at once tough and tender, witty and heartbreaking. (\$13.95, Counterpoint)

Delightful, engaging, and at times hilariously funny, **Julie/Julia**, by Julie Powell, is the ultimate recipe-laden, novice cook's memoir. It is also a rather sweet saga of one woman's challenge to herself to be more than she is. (\$23.95, Little Brown)



Renny Golden is a lifelong political activist, poet, criminologist, and professor, whose new book, **War on the Family: Mothers in Prison and the Families They Leave Behind** shines much-needed light on the consequences of the war on drugs and the mass incarceration policies of our present system. "Rehabilitating few and devastating generations in ways that are systematically

biased by class, race, ethnicity, and immigration status, Golden reveals the heavy costs of mass incarceration — financial, community, foster care, more violence and soul murder of generations to come." —Michelle Fine. (\$22.95 paper, Routledge)



Now in paperback, Barbara Ransby's **Ella Baker & the Black Freedom Movement** is a scrupulously researched, readable, and inspiring biography of a pivotal leader of the Civil Rights Movement. Winner of numerous awards, Katha Pollitt said Ransby's book was "One of the best things to happen to women.... Moving and invaluable." (\$19.95, 496 pages, University of North Carolina Press)

Telling Our Lives: Conversations on Solidarity and Difference, by Frida Kerner Furman, Linda Williamson Nelson, and Elizabeth A. Kelly, explores how three working-class women — one African American, one Jewish, and one Irish American, and all academics — connect across their differences through storytelling and conversation. Their approach and their honesty provide rare insights into how class shapes who we are. (\$26.95, Rowman & Littlefield)



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Pam Harcourt raves (and rants)

One of my favorite books this year has to be Kelly Link's **Magic for Beginners**. Her second collection of stories create these spooky, familiar, sometimes funny worlds where cats are parented by witches, cheerleaders hang out with the devil, and creepifying rabbits keep showing up in ever larger numbers on the lawn as a marriage becomes more and more strained. (\$24, Small Beer Press)

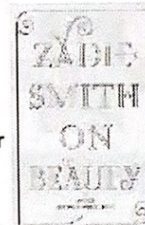


Small Beer Press is owned by Kelly Link and her husband Gavin Grant and, besides publishing consistently interesting new authors, they have a reprint series called Peapod Classics. The second and newest in the series is Naomi Mitchison's *Travel Light*, which garners high praise from Ursula Le Guin on the Small Beer Press website:
<http://www.lcrw.net/peapod/mitchison/index.htm>. (\$12, Peapod Classics)

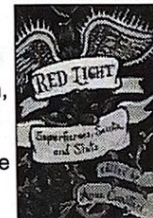
Jill Soloway's *Tiny Ladies in Shiny Pants* is a flawed but wonderfully rant-y look at adolescence, sexism, Hollywood, writing, relationships, celebrities, dogs, diamonds, reclaiming the word "Jewess," and more. A *Six Feet Under* writer for many seasons and co-executive producer for the last season, Jill put me in a bind – she's wonderful on gender, but some bits on class and race were painful to read. Still it made me laugh embarrassingly loud in public and, if you get a chance to hear her read from it, it's even better. This is truly hilarious writing, from an author with a commitment to truth and a heartfelt plea for more women to write. (\$21.95, Free Press)



Zadie Smith's third novel *On Beauty* also has me laughing, and at things that would be unfunny in another writer's hands: American race relations, class differences in the black community, and angry political divides in academia. I'm a third of the way through and I now remember why I loaned her first book, *White Teeth*, to everyone I could – her writing is smart, insightful, and both sharp with and forgiving of her characters' flaws. *White Teeth* was the winner of the Whitbread First Novel Award, the James Tait Black Memorial Prize for fiction, and the Commonwealth Writers First Book Prize. *On Beauty* has already been shortlisted for the 2005 Man Booker Prize. (*On Beauty*, \$24.95, Penguin; *White Teeth*, \$14.95, Vintage)



Arsenal Pulp Press has a new anthology edited by author and performance artist Anna Camilleri that "powerfully reimagines female icons and archetypes," including Janis Joplin, the Rodeo Queen, Pam Grier, Liliith, Wonder Woman, and the Avon Lady. *Red Light: Superheroes, Saints, and Sluts* includes poetry, essays, stories and visual art, and seeks to re-imagine some well-known female icons, and give us some powerful new ones. BTWOF's publisher, Carol Seajay, was particularly fond of Camilleri's *I Am a Red Dress: Incantations on a Grandmother, a Mother, and a Daughter* about, among other things, taking her grandfather to court and winning a jail sentence for him for molesting her (and the generations before her) as a child. (\$18.95 and \$16.95 respectively, both from Arsenal Pulp Press)



Lisa Grunwald and Stephen J. Adler have followed up their *Letters of the Century*, with *Women's Letters: America from the Revolutionary War to the Present*. Nearly 800 pages of women's voices are arranged chronologically; mostly women you've never heard of, although some you have (Emma Goldman writes to Margaret Sanger! Elizabeth Cady Stanton writes to the Akron Falls Women's Convention! Patsy Cline writes to her fan club's president!). These voices come alive when you read them. I think this is a perfect gift for yourself, your friends, or especially for any young person stuck in a boring high school history class. (\$35, 824 pages, Dial Press)



Tish Hayes recommends.....

How to Rent a Negro by performance artist Damali Ayo is the best kind of satire — it does not poke gentle fun at its subject, instead *How to Rent* is often laugh-out-loud funny, incredibly uncomfortable, and scathing in its critique of what passes for race relations in this country. (\$14.95, Lawrence Hill Books)

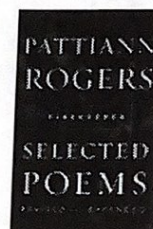


Francesca Lia Block finally returns to her Weetzie Bat series to look at life and love as a grown-up in **Necklace of Kisses**. As Weetzie Bat's relationship with her secret-agent lover-man falls apart, she sets out on a journey to rediscover herself. Her story is full of tears and magic, love and kisses, all told with Francesca Lia Block's poetic, punk-rock style. (\$21.95, HarperCollins)

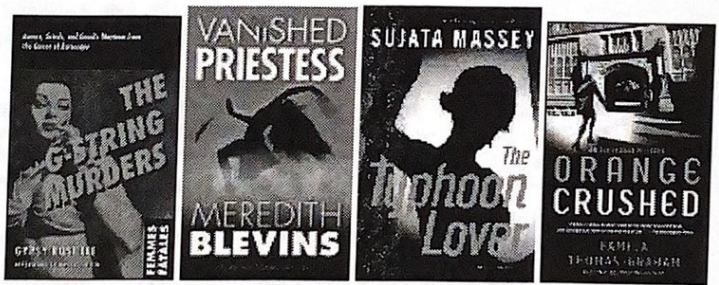


Recently my grandfather asked me what I do with my time, and I found myself explaining that when I'm not at work or eating or sleeping, I'm reading. Some people have hobbies; I have books. I could tell he just didn't get it, which is one reason I am thrilled about Maureen Corrigan's new book **Leave Me Alone I'm Reading: Finding and Losing Myself in Books** — not only does she understand my life, but she's written a book explaining it. As a book reviewer for NPR's *Fresh Air*, Maureen reads for a living, and her book is part memoir, part coming-of-age story, and part reflection on the important books in her life. (\$24.95, Random House)

Milkweed Editions (a fabulous non-profit press) has just released a new and expanded edition of Pattiann Rogers's **Firekeeper**. I love Rogers's keen observation of the world and the precision of her language; her poetry reveals the interiors of what is, to my own eyes, just surface. This collection reflects Rogers's own selection from her thirty-year career. (\$16, Milkweed Editions)



Mysteries
By Nan Cinnater



If you love classic American mysteries – or black-and-white movies made back in the day when women were dames – you'll love **The G-String Murders**. Written in 1941 by Gypsy Rose Lee, it has been brought back into print by the venerable Feminist Press as part of their inspired "Femmes Fatales: Women Write Pulp" series (\$13.95). Not just a novelty act, **The G-String Murders** is a well-plotted mystery full of slangy dialogue and a ton of backstage atmosphere. The sleuth is Gypsy Rose Lee herself, the headline stripper in a not-so-grand burlesque palace in New York, where one of the other strippers is strangled with a G-string.

This may be a case where truth is at least as strange and possibly even more entertaining than fiction. It seems that Gypsy actually wrote most of the book while living in an artistic commune in Brooklyn with the likes of Carson McCullers, W.H. Auden and Jane and Paul Bowles! (Sherill Tippins documents this experiment in living in the wonderfully readable and charmingly gossipy **February House**, \$24.00, Houghton Mifflin.) The Feminist Press has included a scholarly afterword and an appendix to **The G-String Murders**, reproducing Gypsy's letters to her editor at Simon and Schuster, which display her almost post-modern sense of humor. About promoting her book, Gypsy wrote, "...I'll do my specialty in Macy's window to

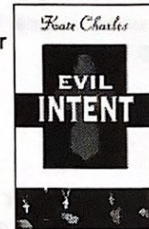


sell a book. If you would prefer something a little more dignified, make it Wanamaker's window."

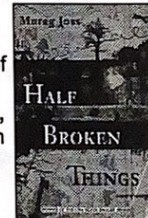
In **The Vanished Priestess** by Meredith Blevins (\$6.99, Forge), California widow Annie Szabo looks into the murder of her neighbor, an aging trapeze artist who runs a women's circus. Annie gets enthusiastic though somewhat enigmatic advice from her mother-in-law, a gypsy fortune teller who has parked her mobile home semi-permanently in Annie's backyard. This is a rich mixture of circus lore, gypsy lore, and free-thinking feminism (turns out the women's circus doubles as a battered women's shelter). *The Vanished Priestess* is the second in Blevins' series of three mysteries featuring Annie Szabo and her mother-in-law, Madame Mina. The first was **The Hummingbird Wizard** (\$6.99, Forge); the third, new in hardcover, is **The Red Hot Empress** (\$24.95, Forge).



The debate over women priests may be a hot topic in the Anglican Church, but could it be a motive for murder? Author Kate Charles takes on this question in **Evil Intent** (\$24.95, Poisoned Pen Press). Callie Anson, new Curate at All Saints', Paddington, is pleased with her reception by her congregation but shocked by the opposition she faces among her fellow clergy. When Father Jonah, a hard-line conservative, is found murdered in the vestry, a woman priest (Callie's friend and mentor Frances) is the chief suspect. The author knows this ecclesiastical territory well; her previous series featured a church preservation expert. The greater feminist interest here, along with appealing women characters, sets this one apart from its traditional British brethren.



For traditional British mystery enthusiasts, the holy grail is a thick, literate, strongly atmospheric novel that bears comparison with P.D. James or Ruth Rendell. On this side of the pond, we suddenly have the benefit of three such books by Silver Dagger Award winner Morag Joss: **Funeral Music**, **Fearful Symmetry**, and **Fruitful Bodies**, newly published in American editions by Dell (\$6.99 – paperbacks, thank you!). These are, in order, the first three in a series combining classical music, tart social satire, and psychological suspense, set in Bath and featuring concert cellist Sara Selkirk. Joss has a new stand-alone hardcover, **Half Broken Things** (\$22.00, Delacorte), that follows three losers (an aging housesitter, a young thief, and an unwed mother) who come together to live happily but highly illegally in a "borrowed" house.



Whether you're an old Paris hand or have never been to Paris except in your imagination, you will want to have the company of Cara Black and her hip sleuth Aimée Leduc as you explore the famous neighborhoods. Aimée debuted in **Murder in the Marais** (\$13.00, Soho), and most recently she pursued **Murder in Clichy** (\$24.00, Soho Press). A Vietnamese nun asks Aimée to deliver an envelope in Clichy, and before you can say, "Zut alors," she's up to her black leather jacket in blood, Buddhism, jade artifacts, and old colonial secrets. More than anything, though, we love Black for her evocation of the City of Light. Here she is on Clichy architecture: "The image the world thought of as Paris: broad tree-lined boulevards riven by the classic gray stone five-storied buildings with metal filigreed balconies and chimney pots like organ pipes on the rooftiles." Viva la France!



If you would rather visit Japan, you may want to travel with Japanese-American antiques expert Rei Shimura in her sixth adventure, **The Typhoon Lover** (\$23.95, HarperCollins) by Sujata Massey. Now based in D.C., Rei accepts a commission that will get her back to her beloved Japan, even though it comes from a mysterious intelligence agency and involves emotionally charged contact with her ex. The fun is in the details – Rei's take on Japanese culture and Massey's knowledge of antique esoterica – but I'm not always crazy about Rei's company. Maybe I'm too



curmudgeonly to appreciate a club-hopping, commitment-phobic heroine who just turned thirty! If you're feeling curmudgeonly as well, try Massey's first Rei Shimura novel, *The Salaryman's Wife* (\$7.50, Harper), a nearly perfect Agatha Christie-style whodunit set in a Japanese mountain village.

New in Paperback:

Orange Crushed by Pamela Thomas-Graham (\$14.00, Pocket), third in a fun and feminist Ivy League series featuring African American economics professor Nikki Chase. The series began – at Harvard of course – with **A Darker Shade of Crimson**, followed by **Blue Blood**, set at Yale (both \$6.99, Pocket). **Orange Crushed** involves murder at Princeton. A graduate of Harvard Business School and Harvard Law School, Thomas-Graham knows whereof she writes.



Absent Friends (\$12.00, Delta), a stand-alone novel by one of my all-time favorite mystery writers, S.J. Rozan, evoking New York City in the aftermath of September 11, 2001. 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. Beautifully done, and yet the fictional story is dwarfed by the overwhelming reality.



We hope you've enjoyed this issue of **More Books for Women**.

If you like it, please tell all your friends and colleagues about **More Books for Women** (and our sister publications, **The Lesbian Edition** and **The Gay Men's Edition**) and encourage them to subscribe as well. If you give holiday gifts, and can give some subscriptions to **More Books for Women** as a way to spread the word about it and to help us launch it far and wide, that would be a wonderful way to support this new publication. But if you don't like it, or have suggestions for improvement, please tell us before you tell your friends. If you *really* like it, and would like to join 25 women in making monthly pledges (\$100-\$25) for a year to help finance its first year, please call or email Maddy@BooksToWatchOutFor.com or give me a call.

We look forward to hearing from you about this exciting new publication. Please email your comments to **More Books for Women** or write to us at PO Box 882554, San Francisco, CA 94188.

Yours in spreading the words,
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