



# It's... Books to Watch Out For!™

— In your inbox —

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

## The Lesbian Edition

### In this issue...

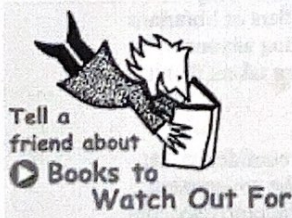
#### News

- The Lesbian Novel in the White House
- Campaign for Reader Privacy
- A few more notes...
- Awards

#### Books

- Find of the Month
- Literary Blooms
- Three for Tea
- Take Back Your Life!
- Of Lives and Literature...
- Womanly Affection...
- Social Science
- Politics
- More on Marriage
- What They Are Reading at Wild Iris
- The Crime Scene
- Now in Paper
- Books To Watch Out For
- Awards

- [Printer-friendly version](#)
- [Super Printer-Friendly Text-Only Version](#)
- [Titles reviewed in this issue \(printable list\)](#)



Sample Issue  
April 2004 Issue

By Carol Seajay

#### The Lesbian Novel in the White House

With the publication of *Bushwomen* (reviewed below), Laura Flanders broke the story:  
Lynne Cheney has a lesbian novel in her closet.

Yes, that Lynne Cheney, Mrs. Dick Vice President Cheney.

Originally published in 1981, *Sisters* was, in Flander's words, "a breathy, gothic romance, horribly written.... celebrating lesbian love and promot[ing] the value of preventative devices – condoms – to women who want to remain free...all this by Lynne Cheney, the culture warrior of the right." (*New York Daily News*, March 10.) And Penguin USA, which had originally published the book as a \$2.50 mass market paperback under its NAL imprint, noticed that it still owned the copyright and immediately announced a reprint.



Needless to say, jaws dropped.

In St. Louis, Left Bank Books' Kris Kleindienst announced that the store would donate 10% of the book's sales to a scholarship fund to send gay youth to NGLTF's Creating Change conference, saying, "What better way to foster educational opportunities for the younger generation of LGBT people than to raise money through the sale of Lynne's lost life chapter? We're promoting patriotism by promoting shopping and leaving no LGBT child behind." Two hundred patrons signed up to make their contribution.

But back in Washington, where Lynne and Dick seem unable to stand up for marriage rights for their daughter Mary and her partner, and where both women seem to have disappeared from the campaign trail, there was decidedly less enthusiasm for the project.

Despite the fact that this would seem to be a literary matter, we're told that it was Cheney's high-powered lawyer, Robert Barnett, who made a "friendly" call to Penguin and that it took less than an hour for Penguin to decide not to publish the book after all. Both Penguin and Barnett stressed that it was a very friendly and above-board conversation with no threats of legal action. (Which would, at least have been interesting, since Penguin



## 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.

- » [Click here to subscribe.](#)
- » [Click here for more info.](#)
- » [Click here to tell a friend](#) about the Lesbian Edition.

## 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.

- » [Click here to subscribe.](#)
- » [Click here for more info.](#)
- » [Click here to tell a friend](#) about the Gay Men's Edition.

## More Books for Women

will launch in 2004.

- » [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

does appear to own the rights.)

Was the republication of the book, with its enthusiasm for lesbian relationships, birth control devices and safe sex, perhaps a bit of an embarrassment to the Bush/Cheney ticket, what with their anti-gay constitutional amendment, anti-abortion, anti-condom, anti-woman, "health care" politics and all? Naw! Why would anyone think that?

"Mrs. Cheney just doesn't think it represents her best efforts as a writer," was the line from Cheney spokeswoman Natalie Rule.

Um hmm.

Or as Kris Kleindienst said, on hearing the news, "If [Penguin] caves in on this, what does that say about what they'll do on more important books?"

Truth be told, lesbians had only bit parts in the book. The heroine, though a bit envious of the lesbian couple's intimacy, was more interested in heterosex on bear rugs, albeit with "sheaths." Still, the bodice ripper was ahead of its time in terms of its options for women. One has to wonder what made Lynne give up her feminist vision and passion for justice for women?

"The note was short. 'Helen, my joy and my beloved,' it began. 'Why do we stay? I have no reason beyond a few pupils who would miss me briefly, and your life would be infinitely better away from him. Let us go away together, away from the anger and the imperatives of men. We shall find ourselves a secluded bower where they dare not venture. There will only be the two of us, and we shall linger through long afternoons of sweet retirement. In the evenings I shall read to you while you do your cross-stitch in the firelight. And then we shall go to bed, our bed, my dearest girl...'"

Read more and check out the back-cover blurb at <http://WhiteHouse.org/administration/sisters.asp>.

[back to top](#)

## The Campaign for Reader Privacy

I'm not big on online petitions, but this one's an exception: The Campaign for Reader Privacy – sponsored by the American Booksellers Association, The American Library Association, and PEN American – is collecting signatures in bookstores, libraries, and online to urge Congress to restore safeguards for reader privacy that were eliminated by Section 215 of the Patriot Act.

This section gave the FBI vastly expanded authority to search business records, including records from bookstores and libraries. It allows the FBI to request the records secretly, without having to convince a judge that there's probable cause to believe the person whose records are being examined has committed a crime, and prohibits the booksellers or librarians served with an FBI demand for a reader's records from telling anyone – partner, lawyer, colleague, or the person whose records were taken, that it happened.

The petition – and the entire campaign – is about restoring confidence that our reading choices aren't – and won't be – monitored by the government. Find more information or sign the petition at <http://www.readerprivacy.com>.



wish to help launch BTWOF are invited to sponsor any of the first 12 issues. Write to Mozelle Mathews for sponsorship information.

[back to top](#)

### Just a few more notes before the books begin....

Do women write better novels than men? That's an old question, but *Times Literary Supplement* Editor Ferdinand Mount weighs in with an unexpected opinion at <http://www.persephonebooks.co.uk/pq/mount.htm>.

### Housekeeping

If you want to change your BTWOF email address or other contact information, click here to update:

- » your subscriber profile
- » whatever has changed.



If you're in San Francisco before May 2, check out the wonderful exhibit, *Reversing Vandalism*, at the San Francisco Public Library. It's an exhibition of 200+ books – mostly LGBT titles and women's health books – that had been severely vandalized. Rather than throwing them away, Hormel Center program manager Jim Van Buskirk (and contributor to **Dangerous Families**) turned the books over to artists who transformed the mutilated books into new works of art. It's a great strategy for transforming this particular form of hate crime into something vibrant and affirming.

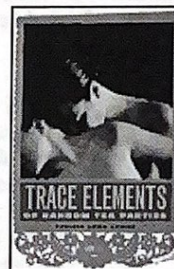
A special thanks to publisher Bella Books for including our fliers in their recent mailings. –And my thanks to everyone who has waited, however impatiently, for this issue!

Yours in spreading the words,  
Carol

[back to top](#)

### Find of the Month

I had a hard time finding my way into **Trace Elements of Random Tea Parties**. I kept starting it but reading it was like trying to dance to music with an unfamiliar beat. Tantalizing. Irresistible, but I was clearly missing some moves.



Finally I asked a friend to read the first few paragraphs to me. She gave me that What's-wrong-with-you-but-we've-been-friends-for-a-long-time-so-I-will look and proceeded to give me the syntax and rhythm I'd been missing.

"I might as well tell you right now that this is really about my girl Weeping Woman, Nana, and me," **Trace Elements** begins. "My best boy, Nolan, she says listening to me is like letting a drunk drive you to a gala event – no indicators given at turns and the windshield wipers are always on. Buckle up, doll. I promise I'll try not to tangle your quinceañera dress. We'll get to the ballroom soon enough...."

Then I asked the pronoun question: "So when she says 'my best boy, Nolan' she means her best (girl) friend?" I asked. "More like 'your best butch buddy,'" my friend replied. But even as I was thinking, "OK," I could see a lecture forming in her mouth: "You know some people find that 'lesbian' is a tired old word. Now-a-days girls will be boys when they want to...." But I already knew that. I just needed to learn how to follow **Trace Element's** pronouns. Weeping Woman, I already knew, was that spirit of discontent that can appear, at a moment's notice, in anyone's culture.

That's all it took to get the moves in my body. I started again at page one and let Felicia Luna Lemus dance me through Leticia's world view for 247



pages, visiting her nana, ("My great-grandmother was something fierce strong."), and the LA dyke's cast of friends and lovers and too-soon-to-be ex's. The language was irresistible, and the story rarely faltered. And I came away with a renewed affection for this generation of dykelets who learned the useful skill of pronoun shifting the way my generation learned to change tires. Women in their twenties and thirties won't need a moment's introduction to this exquisite novel. \$23. Farrar, Straus and Giroux.

"Put simple, (the solteros) hung out in [Nana's] store looking for the México they held in their hearts, where their families were, where all their money earned went to, where their skin was common and their tongue understood – the solteros stood around in the store smoking cigarettes to try to find home.... Some serious cowboy tears would have been shed if that generation of solteros had stayed in town long enough to learn that eventually their habits stomped out Mamá Estrella's story-telling voice."

"Strong presence is family to me...so it was only natural that Vivienne became a good buddy super quick. Didn't hurt any when she said Rob was a complicated mess of a boy. I kept buying Viv drinks just to hear stories about how problematic Rob has always been. She huffed and puffed and blew Rob's persona down."

"The brink of dreams was the only time [Edith] ever talked and she didn't really want answers, so all I had to do was give her my one easy-to-remember-even-when-about-to fall-asleep line and let her continue to get the tension out of her mouth...."

\*\*\*\*\*

[back to top](#)

## Blooming

The first issue of *Bloom*, the new, eagerly awaited LGBT literary journal, is out – and what a wealth of both literary and production delights it is! The cover is beautiful, the design clean, and the visual art, well produced. Just holding the issue (which is actually a 150-page book) is the first pleasure; inside there's short fiction by Stacey D'Erasmus, Judith Nichols, and Andrew Holleran, visual art by Amy Goldstein and Ken Chu, and poetry by Adrienne Rich, Eileen Myles, Cheryl Clark, Beatrix Gates, Minnie Bruce Pratt, and Chrystos, as well as Mark Doty, Edward Field, and nineteen others.

Bloom's goal is to nurture LGBT writers and artists and to foster the appreciation of queer literature and creation:

"*Bloom* does not discriminate against the imagination. Gardeners must identify as Queer (LGBT), but the flora of their labor need not serve any pre-conceived notion of beauty. Peonies, sweet williams, ragweed, and gladiolas – every shade & shape of blossom – are all welcome. Let the garden grow."

Submission details on the web site. Edited by Charles Flowers. Single issues are the bargain of the year at \$10, subscriptions are \$20/year. Bloom, P.O. Box 1231, Old Chelsea Station, NY, NY 10011 or <http://www.bloommagazine.org>

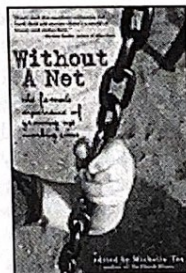


back to top

### Three for Tea

Congratulations to the prolific Michelle Tea. Tea, who is something of a cheerleader and documentarian for the world of tattooed, pierced, politicized and sex-radical queer grrls and boys, has three new books this spring: two anthologies and a collection of poetry. She's loved for her vision, for her support of other writers, for her autobiographical tales, and for selecting the tales in *Best Lesbian Erotica 04* (\$14.95 Cleis).

Click to the "What They're Reading at Wild Iris" (below) for a review of **The Beautiful**. Tea's new poetry collection. The title poem, by the way, is a strangely comforting read on Election Day.



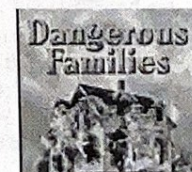
**Without a Net: The Female Experience of Growing Up Working Class** stole my heart in an instant with its gutsy collection of truth-tales from real women's lives. No sob stories here: just riveting detail, honest reality, and, yes, tenderness. But Tea says it best: "The tragedy isn't [these women's] poverty, it's what happens to them *because* of their poverty, the way the world judges and despises them, fights and blames them, makes their lives plenty hard...."

Irresistibly readable, inherently feminist, and the contributors range from Dorothy Allison to Meliza Bañales, from Terry Ryan to Diane di Prima and Eileen Myles, and include a number of new writers to watch out for. What could be better? \$14.95, Seal Press/Live Girls Series.

If you want something edgy, dark, and troubling, turn to **Pills, Thrills, Chills, and Heartache: Adventures in the First Person**, edited by Michelle Tea and Clint Catalyst, for a mixed-gender collection of scary, funny, chaotic – and sometimes poignant – true-life adventures in the contemporary counter-culture. The screaming intelligence of this collection competes with angst, abuse, bulimia, cruelty, and drugs (and that's just the beginning). These more-and-less kinky, gut-wrenching, and occasionally cautionary tales left me craving a politic that could lead to a kinder world. But if you're lonely for speed junkies, scat freaks, cybersensualists, punk-rock shoplifters, gender benders, Tourette's syndrome fetishists, gloomophiles and glamazons, this is your book. \$15.95, Alyson Publications.

And Watch Out For Tea's forthcoming illustrated novel, **Rent Girl**, the tale of a young dyke's adventures in and out of the sex industry's mix of "exciting outlaw occupation and traumatic existential nightmare." July, \$24.95, Last Gasp. Details on Michele Tea's site.

Just as gritty as *Pills...*, but never gratuitously so, **Dangerous Families: Queer Writings on Surviving**, edited by Mattilda (a.k.a. Matt Bernstein Sycamore), is another mixed-gender collection. It also breaks all the rules about gender, sex, and politics as the contributors shatter silences about the many kinds of abuse families





can inflict, but these writers know exactly where they're coming from and are on their way to something better. This collection follows in the footsteps of *The Courage to Heal* and collects "the next generation's" anger, insight, and healing. \$17.95, Harrington Park Press

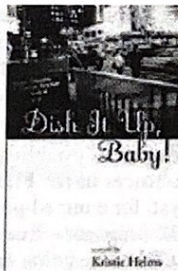


back to top

### Take Back Your Life!

Kristie Helm's **Dish It Up, Baby**, Firebrand II's second offering, follows a plucky twenty-something computer-savvy cubicle-girl forward out of an abusive marriage, backward through her bad-teeth Kentucky childhood, and up, down, and sideways through the adventure of finding out who she is now: a southerner or a southern-drawl New Yorker? a lesbian (or does that just *seem* like a good idea?), a career woman or a temp girl? But find her way, she does. It's a good ride for the reader and a solid second title from the newly reconstituted Firebrand.

Helms's blog (web-log, aka, online journal) won a 2001 Best Writing Award from Diaries.net. If *Dish It Up* is any indication, blogging is great training for emerging novelists. But don't worry if you're not a geek, no computers are required to enjoy this tale. Check out the blog at <http://www.DishItUpBaby.com>. or schedule an online "appearance" with Helms for your book group. \$14.95, Firebrand.

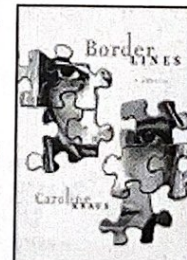


The title, by the way, is taken from the advice a waitress gives our heroine on her first, overwhelmed evening in NYC:

"When we finished eating, the waitress brought the check over and sat down at the table. She told us that subways go 'uptown' and 'downtown' and that there are detailed transit maps posted in every station....She told me that her manager could help us find an apartment.... She told me that New York City was an incredible place to live and that every day I would find a power and strength on the streets that I had never felt before. She

told me that living there was going to be a pain in the ass, but...whenever it felt too difficult to go on...I should stand on the nearest street corner with my arms outstretched and hold my head high and yell as loudly as I could, 'Go ahead and dish it up, baby!' "

Caroline Kraus' **Borderlines**, on the other hand, isn't a lesbian book at all, despite the odd bit of sexuality and the deep passion and attraction between two women. It is, rather, a deeply insightful memoir – albeit one that reads like a thriller – about a friendship gone terribly wrong, what it took to break free of it, the delicate lines between intimacy and identity, and the possibility of giving up one's boundaries and identity to maintain an illusion of love. Rich, complex, even wryly funny at times. Tolerable only because we know that Kraus did find her center again, in the end. A wise and rewarding tale. \$23.95, Broadway/Random House.



back to top



## Of Lives and Literature...

### **Songs of the Gorilla Nation: My Journey Through**

**Autism** is a profound and insightful memoir about growing up with undiagnosed autism (Asperger's Syndrome). Dawn Prince-Hughes writes of unexpectedly finding, after a difficult period of drug abuse and homelessness, an unexpected sense of community and harmony with a zoo-bound family of silverback gorillas, and how she then applied the social skills she learned from the gorillas to understanding and connecting with – human primates.... Less intentionally, perhaps, it's also a memoir of being an out-lesbian in a Montana high school just after Harvey Milk was shot, of a gay community that made room for her, of striving toward understanding relationships and how (and why) to have them, and of her relationship with her partner, Tara, and their son. And it's a profound meditation on the connections between humans and other species and on cross-cultural and interspecies definitions of justice. Unexpectedly I left the book with more sympathy toward men (at least of the silverback variety) and wondering if undiagnosed and untreated autism is common among control-oriented battering men. Prince-Hughes, after a troubled young adulthood, is an anthropologist specializing in primate behavior. In *Songs* she offers a compelling and fascinating tale. \$24, Harmony/Random House.



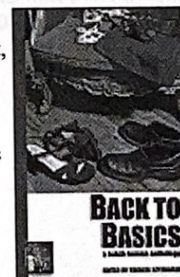
There are days when I enjoy Margaret Atwood's wry, sharp-minded, sharp-tongued nonfiction even more than her fiction. If the arts (and cynicisms) of the writing life are your pleasures, and if you are charmed by sentences like "We do so wish to believe in a logical universe" and eagerly anticipate the deconstructions that follow, indulge yourself with **Negotiating with the Dead: A Writer on Writing**. \$14, Anchor/Random House.

\*\*\*\*\*

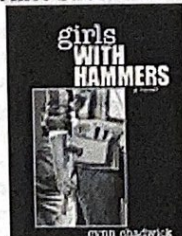
[back to top](#)

## And for a little Girl-Gets-Girl Affection...

**Back to Basics: A Butch-Femme Anthology**, the first offering in Bella's new Bella After Dark (BAD) imprint, offers good, one-handed reading for women who want something spicier than a Naiad, but without the imposition of chains, pains, and humiliations and other downers that are standard fare for trendier lesbian erotic collections. Look for well-dressed roles, well-placed dildos, odd bits of analysis, and a little light bondage and fist-fucking. Edited by Therese Szymanski and featuring work by Karin Kallmaker, Lesléa Newman, Julia Watts, Joy Parks, Carole Rosenfled, krysia lycette villón, and many others. \$14.95, Bella/BAD.



Cynn Chadwick's **Girls with Hammers**, the sequel to *Cat Rising* (\$17.95, Alice Street Editions) is a great read whether you've read the first book or not.



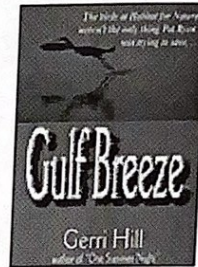
It follows carpenter Lily Cameron's adventures through a difficult year: her best friend and fellow Girl With Hammer has already left town, her girlfriend gets sick of her sulking and takes a job in Europe just as her dad dies and leaves her in charge of the family construction business.... It all means finding new ways to walk through a challenging time – and learning to embrace unexpected alliances while keeping her own



integrity intact. \$19.95 pb, Alice Street Editions/Harrington Park Press.

*"Well constructed and reinforced. This novel hits the nail on the head!"* –Emöke B'Racz, Malaprops Bookstore

**Gulf Breeze**, by Gerri Hill, and **Survival of Love**, by Frankie J. Jones, are both somebody-done-me-wrong-so-I'm-not-easy-to-get songs, but they also feature issues-lite. In **Gulf Breeze**, wildlife biologist Carly Cambridge struggles to instill just a wee bit of politics and consciousness into the heart of brilliant and handsome nature photographer Pat Ryan. **Survival of Love** takes on long-term friendships between lesbians and straight women, cross-generational relationships, and even more daringly, breast cancer in the midst of a passionate new relationship.... Given the light-reading/romance context, I was especially pleased to find the Mautner Project/National Lesbian Health Organization page at the end of **Survival of Love**, which features Alison Bechdel's breast exam drawings and a lesbian-safe place to go for more information. What an excellent idea! Web sites routinely feature "author's favorite links" pages, and books should be able to be "interactive" in the same way. An "author's favorite resources" page could give readers whose interest has been piqued a place to begin. Congratulations to Frankie Jones and to Bella for this innovation. Both books are \$12.95, Bella.



\*\*\*\*\*

[back to top](#)

### Social Science

One of BTWOF's favorite readers highly recommends **The Pecking Order: Which Siblings Succeed and Why** by Dalton Conley. Conley uses national data sets to look at family size, gender, race, sexual orientation, religiosity, social class, etc., to see which siblings do well. The sexual orientation issue is very interesting – lesbian/gay sibs from rich families tend to be downwardly mobile because they are not tapped to take over dad's company, etc., whereas lesbian/gay sibs from poorer families become upwardly mobile because they move away to big cities and are exposed to different jobs, friends with connections, etc. \$24, Pantheon/Random House.

\*\*\*\*\*

[back to top](#)

### Politics

I'm staring at three photos of Condoleezza Rice that "graced" the front page of my local paper last week. In all of them she looks so.... sincere, so wholesome, and so like someone you'd want to trust, and whose friends you'd want to trust, too... At least now, having read Laura Flanders's **Bushwomen: Tales of a Cynical Species**, I know why I feel so suckered by these images and how brilliantly the Bush administration has used women to sugar-coat – and disguise – some of its most brutal policies and anti-human actions. And I understand how the women of Bush's inner circle have been cast – via carefully crafted images – as moderate, malleable, maverick, irrelevant or benign while the reality of their records remains unscrutinized by a media that can't get past its own golly-gee-it's-a-woman-isn't-that-just-so-very-fascinating pseudo-journalism to examine their records and actually report on what these women are





doing. But Flanders pulls the wool away to reveal how Karen Hughes was used to defeat Ann Richards and how pulled-themselves-up-by-their-bootstraps stereotypes have been utilized to disguise Labor Secretary Elaine Chao and Rice's familial and political power, while entertaining us with tales of how Karen Hughes got her first job thanks to NOW and the lesbian subplots in Lynne Cheney's 1981 novel, *Sisters*.

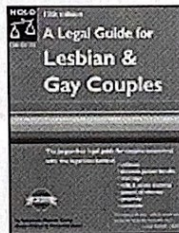
Women can – and often do – decide elections these days. And **Bushwomen** will go a long way toward clarifying the issues for all of us who have felt the least bit suckered by the right's brilliant use of "female friendly" (think "friendly fire") rhetoric to cover its actions. Buy it now, before the elections. And give a copy to all of your sympathetic but confused relatives, friends, and coworkers. \$22, Verso.

*"Excellent, making this book required reading for those of us too young to remember a time before the 'New Right.'"* –Bust

\*\*\*\*\*

[back to top](#)

### More on Marriage



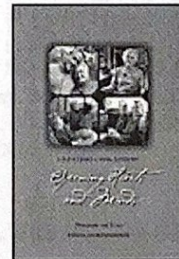
Nolo Press has just released the 12th edition of its excellent, readable, and very useful **Legal Guide for Lesbian and Gay Couples**. This edition covers new domestic-partner laws in California and New Jersey, same-sex marriage in Massachusetts and Canada, the latest in child law, estate planning law, and more. \$29.99 paper, Nolo Press. (See the last issue for other recent books on gay marriage.)

### **Equality Practices: Civil Unions and the Future of Gay Rights** by William Eskridge.

Eskridge argues that lesbians and gays should support compromises like Vermont's civil unions laws without giving up on full formal equality and that these transitional steps will help create the conditions that will make full equal treatment easier to win. \$17.95 pb, Routledge 2002.

### **Civil Unions: Opening Hearts and Minds**, Linda Hollingdale.

Forty-seven black & white photographs and accompanying essays document the legislative struggle for the right to gay/lesbian marriage that resulted in Vermont's historic civil union law. \$23, Common Humanity Press, 2002.



### **On Same-Sex Marriage, Civil Unions, and the Rule of Law: Constitutional Interpretation at the Crossroads**, Mark Strasser.

The United States Constitution has already been interpreted to provide a variety of family-related protections which, if applied consistently, also protect same-sex couples and their children. Strasser explains that only by radically reformulating and severely undermining existing protections can courts and commentators justify the claim that the Federal Constitution does not offer a wealth of family protections, including the right to marry a same-sex partner. \$44.95, Praeger. 2002.

### **Legal Recognition of Same-Sex Partnerships: A Study of National, European and International Law**, edited by Robert Wintemute and Mads



Andenas.

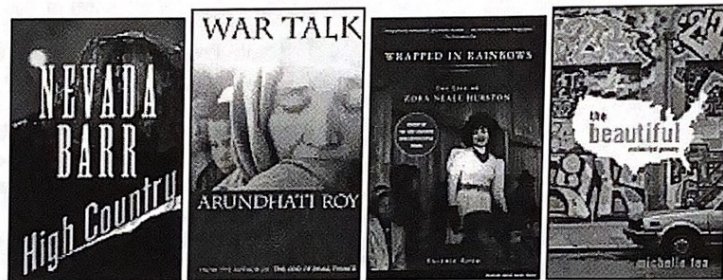
An international team of scholars examines both theoretical issues and the wide variety of legal developments in the United States, Canada, Brazil, thirteen European countries, Israel, South Africa, India, Japan, China, Australia and New Zealand, as well as under European Community and European Convention law, and United Nations human rights law. \$108, Hart Publishing, 2001.

\*\*\*\*\*

[back to top](#)

## What They're Reading at Wild Iris

*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 Dottie Faibisy and Mindy Cardozo at Wild Iris Books what women are reading in Gainesville, Florida. Here's what they said:*



\* Books with lesbian content.

**High Country**, Nevada Barr's bestselling new Anna Pigeon mystery, is set in the Sierra Mountains at Yosemite National Park. Wild Iris Books' reading group enjoyed one of Barr's previous novels, *Bittersweet*, and our customers continue to enjoy Barr's work with *High Country*. \$24.95. G. P. Putnam's Sons.\*

Cynn Chadwick's *Cat Rising* was a very popular item at Wild Iris Books, and the follow-up sequel, **Girls With Hammers**, is another success. Lily Cameron and her all-female construction company are a sexy and mysterious delight for our lesbian fiction fans. \$19.95. Alice Street Editions.\*

Allison Bechdel's classic comic strip serial, *Dykes to Watch Out For*, is, of course, a hilarious and politically savvy consideration of independent bookstore drama, current events, and lesbian romance, child-rearing, and community. The 10<sup>th</sup> book in the series, **Dykes and Sundry Other Carbon-Based Life-Forms to Watch out For**, is a delightful return to form. \$13.95. Alyson Publications.\*

**War Talk**, Arundhati Roy's third book of nonfiction essays is a timely and scathing look at contemporary global politics. In *War Talk*, Roy turns a surgical eye to topics ranging from Donald Rumsfeld to the Palestine/Israel conflict to Noam Chomsky with a writing style that is every bit as enjoyable as her Booker-prize winning debut work of fiction, *The God of Small Things*. \$12.00. South End Press.



**Wrapped in Rainbows** by Valerie Boyd is being called the “definitive” new biography of Zora Neale Hurston. Hurston, a favorite author of the professors and students who order their textbooks through Wild Iris Books, is much-loved by many Floridians for her creative storytelling and locally inspired narratives. *Wrapped in Rainbows* is the first new Hurston biography in more than 25 years, and we can hardly keep it on the shelf! \$16.00. Scribner.

Michelle Tea’s newest book is a collection of poetry bearing the same title as one of the included poems, **The Beautiful** (\$13.95. Manic D. Press). As the title suggests, Tea offers a consideration of the country she’s spent years hitchhiking and poetry slamming her way across and back. Tea, a prolific Boston-born California transplant concocts narratives that are biographical, erotic, and relentlessly funny. Her three novels/memoirs, *The Passionate Mistakes and Intricate Corruption of One Girl in America* (\$12.95, Semiotexte) *Valencia*, and *The Chelsea Whistle* (\$13 and \$14.95, both from Seal Press), are all much loved by the young feminists who frequent Wild Iris Books, and Tea’s venture into published poetry has been long awaited by fans of her performances with the traveling poetry road show, Sister Spit.\*

**The Rise of the Creative Class** by Richard Florida. This is the current “in book” in Gainesville, Florida. As Gainesville was in the #2 spot in Florida’s initial ranking, campaigning candidates and elected officials drop the title as often as they can. The author is speaking in Gainesville at the end of the month, and the organizers of his event have got the city “buzzed” on this book. \$15.95. Basic Books.

**The Trouble with Islam: A Muslim’s Call for Reform in Her Faith**, by Canadian lesbian Irshad Manji, takes a humorous and insightful look at mainstream Islam. An important book for any reader because, as Manji warns: “If more of us don’t speak out against the imperialists within Islam, these guys will walk away with the show.” \$22.95. St. Martin’s Press.\*

**Women Who Eat: A New Generation on the Glory of Food**, features popular feminists such as Ayun Halliday and Michelle Tea challenging both the idea that women are more concerned with dieting than with savoring a good meal, and that feminists can’t be bothered with cooking! This book is part of the Live Girls series from Seal Press, which also includes such Wild Iris favorites as Inga Muscio’s *Cunt* and Ariel Gore’s *Atlas of the Human Heart*. \$15.95. Seal Press.\*



We can’t keep Ellen Degeneres’ new memoir, **The Funny Thing Is . . .**, on the shelf. With her trademark wit and comfortable prose, Ellen gives us the ultimate guide to her everyday battle with greatness. \$23.00. Simon & Schuster.\*

Many thanks to Dotty and Mindy and to all the women at Wild Iris for their help and for all the work they do to support our community. You can find Wild Iris at 802 West University Ave., Gainesville FL 32601. Phone: 352-375-7477 or email [wildirisbk@aol.com](mailto:wildirisbk@aol.com). There's a current list of women's bookstores at [www.litwomen.org/WIP/stores.html](http://www.litwomen.org/WIP/stores.html).



[back to top](#)

**The Crime Scene**  
By Nan Cinnater



Presented by the Mystery Writers of America, the Edgar Awards, named after Edgar Allan Poe, are the premiere American mystery awards, the Oscars of the genre. The 2003 nominations have been announced, and a number of the nominees are of feminist and even lesbian interest. (For a complete list, go to <http://www.mysterywriters.org>.)

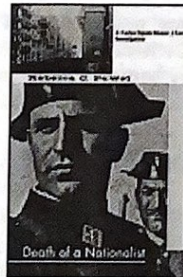
**Out** by Natsuo Kirino, translated by Stephen Snyder (\$22.95, Kodansha International) was nominated for Best Mystery Novel of 2003. Billed as *Thelma-and-Louise-meet-Dostoevsky*, **Out** is a dark crime novel that focuses on four women factory workers in Tokyo, all of whom are caught in some kind of domestic trap. Young Yayoi kills her no-good husband in a rage, and turns to older, wiser Masako and her two friends for help in disposing of the body. **Out** is the first novel by Kirino to be translated into English; it won Japan's highest mystery award and was made into a Japanese movie.



Also nominated for Best Mystery Novel was **Maisie Dobbs** by Jacqueline Winspear (\$24.00, Soho Press). The eponymous heroine of **Maisie Dobbs** is a former WWI nurse – now a private investigator in 1920's London. Her first case involves suspected infidelity, but quickly leads to the fate of several wounded war veterans. A long middle section tells Maisie's story from childhood, including how she met her unusual mentor, Dr. Maurice Blanche. Maurice Blanche is less Sherlock Holmes than William James, putting out an oddly New Age-ish mix of philosophy and psychology: e.g., "Judicious use of the energy of touch can transform, as the power of our aura soothes the place that is injured." Nevertheless, Maisie's story grew on me, and I found myself racing through the last third of the book. Winspear deals thoughtfully with the clash between Maisie's education and her working-class roots, as well as with the changes wrought by the war.



Although **Maisie Dobbs** is a satisfying "read," I did find myself longing for the more artful style and psychological complexity of other books I've read dealing with the traumatic legacy of WWI – notably mysteries such as **Justice Hall** by Laurie R. King (\$6.99, Bantam), which really does feature Sherlock Holmes, and the fascinating series by Charles Todd that began with **A Test of Wills** (\$6.99, Bantam). The gold standard here is the literary trilogy by Pat Barker comprising **Regeneration**, **The Eye in the Door**, and **The Ghost Road** (\$14.00 each, Plume), winner of the Booker Prize.



Another 20th-century war dominates hearts and minds in **Death of a Nationalist** by Rebecca Pawel (\$12.00, Soho Press), nominated for Best First Mystery. In 1939 Madrid, just after the Spanish Civil War, Sergeant Tejada Alonzo y Leon is a member of the feared and hated Guardia Civil, police who uphold the victorious fascist government. While searching for the killer of a murdered comrade, he discovers a wounded Republican in hiding. In unraveling the murder mystery, Tejada also must question his assumptions about who are his friends and enemies, villains and heroes. Pawel recently published a sequel, **The Law of Return** (\$24.00, Soho Press), in which Tejada travels to Biarritz and becomes involved with his former lover, her father, and their Jewish friend, who may be forced to return to Nazi Germany.

**12 Bliss Street** by Martha Conway (\$23.95, St. Martin's Minotaur) was also nominated for Best First Mystery. Twenty-something Nicola, a San



Francisco web designer, gets kidnapped by two teenagers in a comic thriller with a noir kick.

Months ago our esteemed editor, Carol Seajay, picked **Southland** by Nina Revoyr (\$15.95, Akashic Books), a wonderfully atmospheric lesbian novel about a Japanese American law student, as Find of the Issue for the very first BTWOF. The Edgar Committee has also nominated **Southland** for Best Original Paperback Mystery – yet another reason to put this one on your must-read list.



Also nominated for Best Original Paperback, **Find Me Again** by Sylvia Maultash Warsh (Dundurn Group – no longer available; check used book stores or your library) looks like it would be worth tracking down. Second in a series featuring Toronto physician Rebecca Temple, **Find Me Again** alternates a contemporary story of Polish Holocaust survivors with a historical mystery set in Russia under Catherine the Great.



For the record, one of my favorite women writers, S.J. Rozan, won the Edgar Award for Best Mystery Novel last year for **Winter and Night** (\$6.99, St. Martin's Press). This is the latest in her series about two New York City private eyes who are informal partners: Chinese American Lydia Chin and hard-boiled-with-a-soft-center Bill Smith. The series began with **China Trade** (\$6.50, St. Martin's Press), which focused on Lydia and her Chinatown home. In **Winter and Night**, Smith's teenage nephew has run away from his New Jersey home. Exploring the suburban wilderness outside of her beloved NYC, Rozan takes on teenage anomie and the jock culture that can drive disaffected kids to Columbine-style violence.



[back to top](#)

### Now in Paper

And with a shiny new, much more science-fictionish cover: **Solitaire** by Kelley Eskridge. About which BTWOF said, "Excellent writing, a profoundly insightful and engrossing story, and a complex exploration of passion and commitment." If you read any science fiction at all (or even if you don't), make a beeline for this book! \$13.95, Eos/HarperCollins.

**Leaving Mother Lake**, by Yang Erche Namu and Christine Mathieu, "fascinating portraits of a girl growing up amidst huge cultural changes and of the 'Country of Daughters' – the still-functioning matrilineal society high in the Himalayas where she was raised.... The telling is as wonderful as the history." \$14.95, Little Brown

**Crawfish Dreams**, Nancy Rawles' sequel to *Love Like Gumbo*, features lesbian activist Grace's mother, Camille, (got that?), Camille's attempts to reconcile her children's errant (to her eyes) choices with her own priorities, and a few mad schemes designed as much to pull the kids back in as to generate retirement income. A great adventure set on the Creole edge of Watts. \$13, Anchor/Random House.

**Nothing That Meets the Eye: The Uncollected Stories of Patricia**



**Highsmith, \$15.95, Norton.**

Click to [here](#) to read BTWOF's original reviews of these books.

\*\*\*\*\*

[back to top](#)

### Books to Watch Out For

Alice Walker's new novel, **Now Is the Time to Open Your Heart**. \$24.95, Random House.

\*\*\*\*\*

[back to top](#)

### Awards

#### The Amelia Bloomers

If you buy books for young readers, check out the 2004 Ameila Bloomer List. All the books on the list celebrate girls and women as a vibrant force in the world, the power of choice in the lives of girls and women, and/or girls and women who stand up for themselves and others. The Bloomer list covers picture books through high school reading and is sponsored by the Feminist Task Force of the Social Responsibilities Round Table of the American Library Association. What a great resource!  
<http://www.libr.org/FTF/bloomer.html>

#### Alice B Readers

The 2003-2004 Alice B Readers' Appreciation Medal went to Peggy Herring, Karin Kallmaker, and Radcliffe. The awards include a \$500 honorarium, the Reader's Appreciation Medal, and a silver lapel pin.

The Alice B Awards are given to authors of lesbian fiction who have produced a body of well-written, inspirational, and entertaining fiction. The award comes from a group of lesbians in Arizona who, after years of reading and enjoying books written by, for, and about lesbians, decided to thank "writers who have contributed so much to our community and culture." The awards were initially given for a single book published by Rising Tide Press but were reconceptualized as an award for a body of work after Rising Tide's demise. Recipients are selected from a "favorite lesbian authors" list. Readers may nominate writers to the Favorite Authors list by writing to the Alice B. Committee, 181 East Allen Lane, Huachuca City, AZ 85616.

#### Nebulas

Nalo Hopkinson's **Salt Roads**, featured in our last issue, was nominated for a Nebula, as was **Diplomatic Immunity** by Lois McMaster Bujold, **The Mount** by Carol Emshwiller, **Light Music**, by Kathleen Ann Goonan, and **The Speed of Dark** by Elizabeth Moon. Novellas on the Nebula shortlist include Eleanor Arnason's "Potter of Bones" and Kage Baker's "Empress of Mars."

You can read excerpts from the nominated novels and novellas, as well as nominated short stories by Eleanor Arnason, Carol Emshwiller, Karen Joy Fowler, and Molly Gloss by following the links from <http://sfwa.org/awards/2004/nebfinal2003.html>

#### Publishing Triangle Awards Finalists



**The Ferro-Grumley Award for Fiction: Women**

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

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

Nina Revoyr, *Southland* (Akashic)

**The Ferro-Grumley Awards for Fiction: Men**

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

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

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

**The Judy Grahn Award for Lesbian Nonfiction**

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

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

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

**The Randy Shilts Award for Gay Nonfiction**

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

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

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

**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)

**The Publishing Triangle Award for Gay Male Poetry**

Patrick Donnelly, *The Charge* (Ausable Press)

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

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

**Lammy Update:**

The Lambda Literary Foundation has removed *The Man Who Would Be Queen* from the nominations from the Transgender/GenderQueer category after the judges for that category concluded that the book was not an appropriate nomination for the category. Click for details.

\*\*\*\*\*

That's it for this month. See you next issue.

(Carol can be reached at [Editor@BooksToWatchOutFor.com](mailto:Editor@BooksToWatchOutFor.com), or at PO Box 882554, San Francisco CA. Books for review, author news, interesting links – all appreciated.)

