



It's... Books to Watch Out For!™

— In your inbox —

The Lesbian Edition

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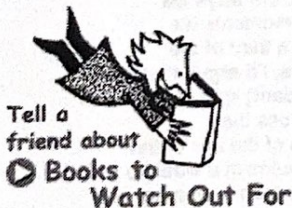
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About BTWOF

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.

— This Issue Sponsored by —

Advocate Books

The proud publisher of
Dinah! Three Decades of Sex, Golf, & Rock 'n' Roll
by Michelle Kort

This lavishly illustrated, oversize book details how the first professional women's golfing tournament became the world's biggest lesbian pool party!

Volume 1 Number 12

Happy V-Season.

Eve Ensler used her one-woman play, *The Vagina Monologues*, to launch a movement (backed by fundraising) to facilitate the eradication of violence against women. February to March is *Vagina Monologues* season as thousands of "vagina warriors" around the world organize and perform the play creating consciousness-raising and fundraising events dedicated to eradicating violence against women. This year's theme is Women of Iraq: Under Siege. In just 7 years Ensler's groups have sponsored 2,300 performances in 80 countries and raised \$25 million worldwide, funding everything from a safe house in Kenya for girls fleeing genital mutilation to Stop Rape contests in Guatemala to teaching self-esteem to jailed pimps and prostitutes here in the US of A. This issue of **Books To Watch Out For** is dedicated to valentines, vaginas, vulvas, vagina warriors and to all the victories along the way.

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Find(s) of the Month

When Fox Is a Thousand

Arsenal Pulp Press has just re-released Larissa Lai's wonderful tale **When Fox Is a Thousand**, that I somehow missed when Press Gang published it in 1995. Lai uses a Chinese version of that classic myth about foxes taking over human souls to illuminate the story of one young Chinese Canadian name-challenged dyke, Artemis Wong, making her way in Vancouver. (Caldecott Medalist Mordicai Gerstein is getting a lot of attention right now for *The Old Country*, a children's story based on an Eastern European version of the myth.) In Lai's version, the fox, if he can successfully jump from body to body for a thousand years, will gain immortality. But at what cost? And to whom? Foxes – and dykes – have their own, frequently conflicting, versions of integrity, and both Artemis and the fox bring their histories with them as Lai (and Wong, and her circle of friends) sort through gender, sexuality, stereotypes, racism, family, faith, urban discontent, and the passage of time to build their own lives and mythologies.



The Lesbian Edition

covers both lesbian books and the whole range of books lesbians like to read. It covers news of both the women in print movement and mainstream publishing. Written and compiled by Carol Seajay.

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The Gay Men's Edition

announces and reviews new books by and about gay men as well as other books of interest and gay publishing news. Written and compiled by Richard Labonte.

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More Books for Women

will launch in 2005.

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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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Finding BTWOF

Lai's writing is exquisite, and never drags:

"Enough of summer clung to the tress that the air was still warm, although the thin blue odour of winter hovered around them all evening."

"As a farewell gift [this is the fox speaking from the depths of the T'ang Dynasty] I taught her how kisses come not from the mouth, but from a well deep below the earth. The husband was smitten.

Is it my fault she ran off with the concubine?

Other foxes thought so, and chalked it up to the evil influence of the West, where personal whim comes before family pride and reputation. Westerners had been coming and going from the capital for hundreds of years. Their manner of dress had become fashionable among the students and courtesans. Their strange religion less so. Their horses – everyone wanted their horses, except, perhaps us foxes.

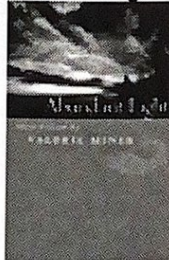
Other foxes chastise me for my unorthodox methods.... Their scorn, on the other hand, I understand well enough."

Says Lai about Fox:

"In writing *When Fox Is a Thousand*, I was not interested in heroic characters or easy solutions to complex problems. None of the characters in the book are particularly "nice" people. I have had the good fortune of coming of age in a feminist and anti-racist community that stressed the importance of producing "positive role models" for young women. Much of the writing I cut my teeth on accomplished this. And I respect it, very much so. But when I started writing this book, at the age of twenty-four, I was desperate to read books that showed youth as I knew it to be, not as some ideal form, or series of moral lessons. I was particularly interested in the disconnections among young people. I wanted to explore the difficult landscapes of weakness, betrayal, sorrow and longing. I was interested in my own generation's relationship to history, myth and spirituality, precisely because these were things we'd been cut off from."

And she succeeds, brilliantly. It's a haunting, sweetly surreal, but not always easy, story. But well worth the investment. \$16.95US; \$21.95C, Arsenal Pulp Press.

Abundant Light



If you want a good, satisfying read, but don't have time for a novel, many of the stories in Valerie Miner's **Abundant Light** offer a novel's worth of satisfaction: characters that resonate, images that linger, and sharp, lucid intelligence. Miner is at her best in this collection of stories that illuminate family and friendship networks, the ways we shape and are shaped by them, and the moments we succeed – or fail – with them. While only a third of the stories include specifically lesbian themes, I'd argue that all of them bask in the unique (and abundant) light of "outsider" experience that illuminates across the

particulars of gender, class, or sexual orientation regardless of the sex of the partner a specific character is mourning. If I had only 25 minutes in a week to indulge in reading, I'd head straight for "The Veranda" – and then remember it at every stop sign I passed for the next week.

"New passengers boarding. She hadn't noticed. One of the advantages or liabilities of old age was that you weren't always where you were supposed to be – even when you were there." – from "Greyhound, 1970"

Valerie Miner has a dozen books to her credit: Her novels include *Range of Light*, *A Walking Fire*, *Winter's Edge*, *All Good Women*, and *Murder in the English Department*. *The Low Road: A Scottish Family Memoir* and *Trespassing and Other Stories*, as well as her novel, *Blood Sisters*, have all

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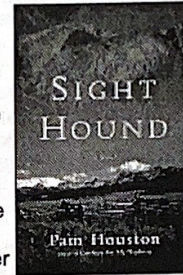


been recently republished by MSUP. *Blood Sisters* was one of my favorite new novels during those early days of feminist and lesbian passion. Back when I was working at *Old Wives Tales* we used to import it from the U.K. – albeit somewhat illegally – before the U.S. edition was published. \$16.95, Michigan University Press.

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More Fiction

Lesbian or not (and it mostly isn't), **Sight Hound** is probably the best love story in the issue: What does it take for a woman to go from a history of not-so-good (read: failed) relationships to the kind that have depth, continuity, respect, and long-term endurance? Romance novels are always trying to tell us it's the allure of the perfect body, of chiseled cheekbones, or come-hither eyes, or that mysterious inexplicable awareness (read: consuming sexual attraction) that signifies that *this* is the one person to whom you can, finally, fully, open your heart... But Pam Houston - my favorite, cynical chronicler of frustrating relationships (*Cowboys Are My Weakness* and *Waltzing the Cat* are both books I give friends suffering through bad break-ups) - has figured it out: It's the love of a good...dog.



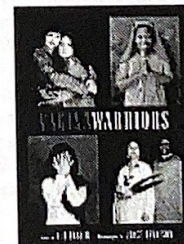
Sight Hound tells the tale of one woman's transition as seen – and fostered – by an Irish wolfhound. Chapters offer perspectives from various significant others in Rae's (Dante's person's) life – the cat, the back-up dog, the cancer vet (passionate about dogs, lacking in people skills), the therapist (good with people, lacking in dog skills), the butch (but not gay) ranch-manager Darlene ("I was married one time, for about ten minutes. Didn't take.") and various other human friends who track Rae's gradual understanding of what Dante has spent his life teaching her: that love and loss are inextricably connected, at least if you're going to love a wolfhound with a ten-year life expectancy, that every minute of both is to be cherished, and that you can build a circle of friends (human and animal) who will see you through. Houston's signature emotional integrity, her wry humor, her marvelous portrayal of dynamic friendship networks, along with odd bits of gender bending, same-sex attractions, all combine to provide an ironic bit of good cheer in these troubled, troubling, times. \$23.95, Norton.

Houston cheerfully admits that both her nonfiction and her fiction run about 82% true. You can see pictures of Dante on her web site: <http://www.pamhouston.net>.

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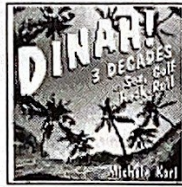
Nonfiction

Vagina Warriors – photos by Joyce Tenneson built around an essay by Eve Ensler – makes a great V-Day gift for the activist(s) closest to your heart. It offers a montage of photos of activists, performers, mother-daughter teams, lovers, transgenders, and other vagina warriors shot at V-events in five countries. From actors to bankers, from Suze Orman to student activists, from Zagreb to Atlanta, from Lily Tomlin to preschoolers who learn to defend themselves against sexual attack, **Vagina Warriors** celebrates all the success along the way. It's a heady celebration of women's activism – of each woman doing her bit – and a wonderful reminder that the women's movement is alive and flourishing. \$19.95 paper, \$40 hardcover, Bulfinch Press.



"You don't just hook up with Eve, you become part of her crusade. There's a core of us who are Eve's army." –Glenn Close

If lesbian music festivals are Midwestern, the lesbian pool party that's grown up around the Dinah Shore Golf Tournament is all California. Michele Kort's **Dinah! Three Decades of Sex, Golf, and Rock 'n' Roll** offers a short history of women's golf, the high incidences of lesbians therein, the evolution of the Dinah Shore Golf Tournament, its magnetic attraction for, well, sporty dykes, and its evolution into the ultimate lesbian pool party. It's a great read and full of fun facts, photos, pull-outs and even 20 full-color LPGA trading cards complete with statistics, gaydar ratings and why-we-love-her factoids. All this and useful information on where to stay and what to do when you get there. What to look for in the future? More lesbians from all over the U.S. – and Europe. Kort's previous credits include *Soul Picnic: The Music and Passion of Laura Nyro* and collaborating with Chastity Bono on *The End of Innocence*. \$18.95, Out Traveler Books/Alyson.



Oops, yep, it's tax season, too. And with a new edition out just in time to give self-employed women a hand: Jan Zobel's **Minding Her Own Business: The Self-Employed Woman's Essential Guide to Taxes and Financial Records**. Perfect for women thinking about starting businesses, too. Or women who own rental property or.... I gave it to a lover, once, just for the quote at the beginning: "Over and over again courts have said that there is nothing sinister in arranging one's affairs to keep taxes as low as possible." – Judge Learned Hand. \$14.95, Sphinx Publishing/Sourcebooks.

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Valentine's Clit Lit

By Suzanne Corson

BTWOF asked bookseller Suzanne Corson – well-loved for her erotica recommendations during her years running Boadecia's in Berkeley – for her thoughts on the current round-up of women's erotica anthologies and how to choose between them.

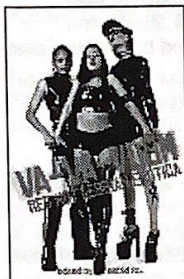
Reading erotica aloud to a lover is a great start for a romantic evening. There are erotica anthologies to satisfy all sorts of tastes....

Cleis Press' **Best Lesbian Erotica** series is one of the most honored (two Lambda Literary Awards and a nomination this year) and best known erotica anthologies around. This year's collection continues the tradition of quality writing from both known (Peggy Munson, Rachel Kramer Bussel) and lesser known (L. Shane Conner, Barrett Bondon) erotica writers with steamy and edgy stories. Those who have enjoyed previous editions will not be disappointed in this, the 10th Anniversary edition. There are initiation stories, some fetishes (boots figure prominently) and one historical tale ("An Incident in Whitechapel" by Catherine Lundoff). There is less s/m in this year's edition than in previous years but much more (silicone) cocksucking. A note for women who don't like gender play: this year's collection is full of it (and two stories include bio males in group sex scenes). One great story, Eric(a) Maroney's "Boxer Briefs," explores how one couple disagrees about how much gender exploration is okay in their relationship. If you like butch/femme dynamics, genderplay, strap-on scenes (with both butches and femmes doing the honors), and well-written smut, this will get you hot. **Best Lesbian Erotica 2005**, edited by Tristan Taormino, selected and introduced by Felice Newman, \$14.95, Cleis.



If you prefer your lesbian erotica to be chockfull of lesbians and female pronouns but also value quality writing and some edgy spiciness, **Infinite Pleasures: An Anthology of Lesbian Erotica** will satisfy. It features well-loved and prolific authors like Leslea Newman, as well as favorite

Naiad/Bella writers (Karin Kallmaker, Therese Szymanski, Jean Stewart, Jennifer Fulton), and many authors known to fans of the Xenaverse, the online and print domain for Uber-Xena-fan-fiction-turned-lesbian-literature stories (Radclyffe, Georgia Beers, Lois Cloarec Hart, Katlyn). Two very fun stories feature long-term couples engaged in role-play: Gabrielle G. Goldsby's "Three-Day Weekend" and "Food for Thought" by CN Winters. The stories in this collection are spicy, sweet, innocent, raunchy, and lesbian, lesbian, lesbian. Edited by Stacia Seaman and Nann Dunne, \$18.99, Intaglio.



Reading **Va-Va-Voom: Red Hot Lesbian Erotica** was a break from the rest; since most of the authors are British, they offer a different variety of colloquialisms (read: sex slang) than their U.S. counterparts. Content-wise, this collection is somewhere in between *Best Lesbian Erotica 2005* and *Intimate Pleasures*, especially in terms of the amount of gender play: there's some but not tons. The writing's a bit choppy than the other two books, but some folks like that, especially in erotica. Look for sizzling stories by Fiona Cooper, Helen Sandler, and Cherry Smyth as well as a few authors from the U.S. like Rachel Kramer Bussel. Edited by Astrid Fox, \$16.95US,

Diva Books.

Fans of Radclyffe (the Honor series and the Justice series, among others) and those who like succinct lesbian erotica will *really* like **Change of Pace: Erotic Interludes**. These twenty-five short stories get right to the point – lesbians having orgasms, lots of them: alone, with lovers, with friends, with strangers, via cybersex, at airports, in hotels... Radclyffe has a keen ability to quickly communicate a protagonist's state of mind and motivation, so even though many of these pieces were short short, they felt complete. And hot. \$14.95, Bold Strokes Press.

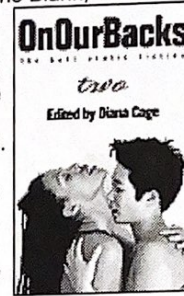
Bottoms Up: Writing About Sex is a very queer collection indeed, with pretty much every sort of coupling represented. The majority of it is lesbian, though. It's not all erotica (i.e. intended to arouse) but it is all about sex. I especially enjoyed "Manifesto" by Felicia Luna Lemus, the poem "Living Legend" by Daphne Gottlieb, and the excerpt from Michelle Tea's *The Chelsea Whistle*. Edited by Diana Cage (editor of *On Our Backs* magazine), \$14.00, Soft Skull Press.

If you or your lover identify as bisexual (or if you enjoy mixed-gender as well as same-gender erotica), you'll be pleased with the quality and heat in **Lust: Bisexual Erotica** by Marilyn Jaye Lewis. This is an assortment pack of stories, with all sorts of scenarios represented including threesomes, public sex, phone sex, and women exploring "taboos" together. \$14.95, Alyson.

Want to give a Valentine to a (predominantly straight) girlfriend as opposed to a Girlfriend? **Best Women's Erotica 2005** is your best bet, with well-written and steamy stories like Alison Tyler's "Evian" and the excerpt from Jane Smiley's novel *Good Faith*. There are also three lesbian-themed stories ("Dyeing for Her" by Sophie Mouette, "The Flight of the Prairie Lily" by Sacchi Green, and Andrea Miller's "Picking Up"). For a large variety of topics with a dash of international flavor, **The Mammoth Book of Women's Fantasies** is the best bang for the buck (\$12.95 for over 50 stories). Women from around the world responded to a survey about their fantasies, and these stories are the result. Presented as first-person narratives, they will appeal to anyone with a voyeuristic bent – it's like peering in on the private fantasies of all the survey respondents. Lots of woman/woman action sprinkled throughout. **Best Women's Erotica 2005** edited by Marcy Sheiner, \$14.95, Cleis. **The Mammoth Book of Women's Fantasies**, edited by Sonia Florens, \$12.95, Carroll & Graf.

I haven't been able to spend enough time with two recent releases from Alyson: **On Our Backs: The Best Erotic Fiction, Volume 2** (see BTWOF: The Lesbian Editon #7) and **Ultimate Lesbian Erotica 2005**. I did read and appreciate Lucy Jane Bledsoe's story "Old-Fashioned Sex" in the **On Our Backs** volume, about a fortysomething woman teaching a twentysomething sex-positive dyke how hot sex can be without a bunch of accessories. Other

pieces in this collection are by fabulous authors like Hanne Blank, Thea Hillman, and Lee Lynch, so I hope to read the rest soon. The pieces in **Ultimate Lesbian Erotica 2005** seem short short to me, as if big chunks had been removed so that only the "naughty bits" remained. Which, if that's the case, is a shame – there are great writers in here (tatiana de la tierra, Karin Kallmaker, Lori Selke, Amie M. Evans) who write excellent, fully-fleshed-out stories. I'd love to read the longer versions of some of these, if they exist... **On Our Backs: The Best Erotic Fiction, Volume 2** edited by Diana Cage, \$14.95, Alyson. **Ultimate Lesbian Erotica 2005** edited by Nicole Foster, \$14.95, Alyson.

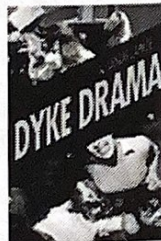
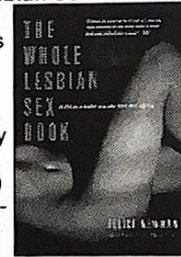


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More V-Season Considerations

If erotica doesn't float your boat, consider the following:

Felice Newman's revised and expanded **The Whole Lesbian Sex Book: A Passionate Guide for All of Us** answers way more questions than most of us could dream up. Just about as sex-positive and empowering as it can get and still be paper-based. Designed "for all women who desire women – lesbian, bisexual, butch, femme, androgynous, and transgender" it covers everything from contemporary language to explaining the why (and how) of (silicone) cocksucking, ways to address mismatched (or declining) libidos, sex toys on a budget, and, of course, all the how-to and staying-healthy classics. That said, I'd still like a lot more than a paragraph on sexual patterns as the decades pass and for the illustrations to include some well-wrinkled women... I always thought that one of the points of being a lesbian was that you got to *keep on* having good sex. I wanna see that writ large in our sex-books. 380 *big* pages. \$24.95 paper, Cleis Press.



But what's sex without a little drama? Or life? Leslie Lange's **Dyke Drama: Your Guide to Getting Out Alive** is both hilarious and all too real. The cover is one of the most effective take-offs on the 60s pulp novels I've ever seen. And that's just the beginning. Well, no, actually in the *beginning* the publisher's catalog said the book was by Terri Fabris (an Alyson editor) and Angela Brown (Alyson's editor in chief, i.e. Terri's boss. *Drama!*). So what happened to Terri? And Angela? Who is Leslie Lange? If you followed me this far, this is your book. And if you're tired of drama, so much the better. **Dyke Drama** is both

funny *and* insightful; it deconstructs the drama on "The L Word" and the drama queen customers at feminist bookstores (and no doubt your ex- if not yourself) with equal precision. And "Leslie" (whoever she is) offers exit lines, early warning systems, and appropriate humor for it all. Not up for reading a whole book on drama? Not to worry: Not quite as elegant as *Dinah!*, **Dyke Drama** is one of those large-print, verbally-graphic, eminently scannable books designed for readers who spend more time online than between the (book) covers – but without being so over the edge that the print-on-page readers won't enjoy it. Actually, Seal Press, some decades ago, pioneered a large-print easy-reader version of their classic book for battered women, *Getting Free*, for women too caught up in trauma to be able to read the "fine" print of ordinary books. It was enormously successful, and the same principals may also apply here – albeit with tongues firmly in cheek.. Another fine book to read aloud with your gf, your ex-, or your best buddy on otherwise boring evenings...\$14.95, 230-pink-tinged pages, Alyson Publications.

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Publishing Triangle Launches Notable Lesbian Books List

Hooray for the Publishing Triangle! Recognizing that lesbian books aren't getting enough ink these days, the PT has launched an annual Notable Lesbian Books list to bring recognition to outstanding lesbian literature. This first list was created by asking prominent lesbian book reviewers, booksellers, librarians and/or authors to name the most notable lesbian-themed books by lesbian or bisexual authors published in 2004.

Top 10 Notable Lesbian Books

Titles are listed alphabetically by author; annotations by the Publishing Triangle.

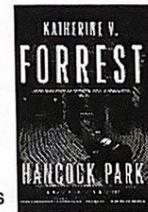
A Seahorse Year by Stacey D'Erasmus (Houghton Mifflin) Set in contemporary San Francisco, this new novel from the author of *Tea* tells the story of an extended family transformed by the emerging breakdown of a troubled adolescent boy. The lives of those who love Christopher—his mother, Nan; her lover, Marina; his gay father, Hal; and Christopher's loyal girlfriend, Tamara—are pushed to the edge by something new in him that mystifies them all. When he runs away, far into the woods of Northern California, their assumptions about themselves and one another are sorely tested.



Warrior Poet: A Biography of Audre Lorde by Alexis De Veaux (W.W. Norton) The long-awaited first biography of an American icon of womanhood, poetry, African American arts, and survival. Drawing on the private archives of the poet's estate, personal journals, and interviews with members of Lorde's family, friends, and lovers, De Veaux assesses the cultural legacy of a woman who personified the defining civil rights struggles of the twentieth century.

Life Mask by Emma Donoghue (Harcourt) The bestselling author of *Slammerkin* turns her attention to the Beau Monde of late eighteenth-century England, turning the private drama of three celebrated Londoners into a robust, full-bodied portrait of a world, and lives, on the brink of revolution. In a time of looming war and terrorism, of glittering spectacle and financial disasters, the wealthy liberals of the Whig Party work to topple a tyrannical prime minister and a lunatic king. Their marriages and friendships stretch or break; political liaisons prove as dangerous as erotic ones.

Hancock Park by Katherine V. Forrest (Berkley Publishing) When Detective Kate Delafield and her partner, Detective Joe Cameron, get the call to investigate a homicide in the secluded, old-money neighborhood of Hancock Park, Kate has the feeling it's not going to be murder as usual. Her hunch is correct.



Why I Wake Early by Mary Oliver (Beacon) Mary Oliver has been writing poetry for nearly five decades, and in that time she has become America's foremost poetic voice on our experience of the physical world. This volume of forty-two new poems is imbued with the extraordinary perceptions of a poet at the height of her power, considering the everyday in our lives and finding reasons to marvel at all around her.

Luna by Julie Anne Peters (Little Brown) A National Book Award finalist for Young People's Literature, *Luna* tells the story of Liam, who can't stand the person he is during the day. Like the moon from whom he has chosen his female namesake, his true self, Luna reveals herself only at night. For years, Liam has transformed himself into the beautiful girl he longs to be with help from his sister's clothes and makeup in the secrecy of their basement bedrooms. Now, everything is about to change—Luna is preparing to emerge from her cocoon. But are Liam's family and friends ready to welcome Luna into their lives?



Name All the Animals: A Memoir by Alison Smith (Scribner) A luminous, poignant true story of grief and secret love: the tale of a family clinging to the memory of a lost child, and a young woman struggling to define herself in the wake of his loss. As children, siblings Alison and Roy Smith were so close that their mother called them by one name: Alroy. But on a cool summer morning when the author was fifteen, she woke to learn that Roy, eighteen, was dead. This is Smith's extraordinary account of the impact of that loss—on herself, on her parents, and on a deeply religious

community.

Venus of Chalk by Susan Stinson (Firebrand) Take the trip of a lifetime with Carline, a home economist and woman-of-size, Tucker, a bus driver, and Mel, a retiree, as they journey from Massachusetts to Texas to unload an old city bus. In the process, these friends also leave behind their preconceived notions about one other, drop their inhibitions and become fully who they were meant to be.

Rent Girl by Michelle Tea, illustrated by Laurenn McCubbin (Last Gasp) *Publishers Weekly* called Michelle Tea "a modern-day Beat, a kind of pop ambassador to the world of the tattooed, pierced, politicized and sex-radical queer-grrls of San Francisco. [She] dramatizes the hopes and hurts, apathies and ambitions of young lesbians looking for love in the Mission District." *Rent Girl* continues Tea's graphic and uncompromising autobiographical bender, telling the story of her years as a prostitute, with provocative and richly illustrated work by Laurenn McCubbin.

Alice Walker: A Life by Evelyn C. White (W.W. Norton) The first full-length biography of the author. We learn of Walker's activism in the 1960s freedom movement and her leadership of the debate on black women's art, politics, and sexuality. *The Color Purple* garnered Walker the Pulitzer Prize in Fiction—the first awarded to a black woman writer. Drawing on papers, letters, journals, and extensive interviews with Walker, her family, friends, and colleagues, and with leading American cultural figures including Gloria Steinem, Quincy Jones, and Oprah Winfrey, White assesses one of the most influential writers of our time.

20 Additional Notable Lesbian Books

Alphabetically by author

1. **Baby Steps: How Lesbian Alternative Insemination is Changing the World** by Amy Agigian (Wesleyan University)
2. **Pinned Down by Pronouns** edited by Toni Amato and Mary Davies (Conviction)
3. **Becoming: Young Ideas on Gender, Identity and Sexuality** edited by Diane Anderson-Minshall and Gina De Vries (Xlibris)
4. **Margaret Webster: A Life in the Theater** by Milly S. Barranger (University of Michigan)
5. **I Had Brain Surgery, What's Your Excuse: An Illustrated Memoir** by Suzy Becker (Workman)
6. **The Dead** by Ingrid Black (St. Martin's)
7. **love conjure/blues** by Sharon Bridgforth (RedBone)
8. **On Our Backs Guide to Lesbian Sex** edited by Diana Cage (Alyson)
9. **Woman in the Mirror** by Jackie Calhoun (Bella)
10. **As You Desire Me** by Fiona Cooper (Red Hot Diva)
11. **Crybaby Butch** by Judy Frank (Firebrand)
12. **Summer of Her Baldness: A Cancer Improvisation** by Catherine Lord (University of Texas)
13. **The Eleventh Hour** by Lauren Maddison (Alyson)
14. **Songs of a Gorilla Nation: My Journey Through Autism** by Dawn Prince-Hughes (Harmony)
15. **The School Among the Ruins: Poems 2000-2004** by Adrienne Rich (W.W. Norton)
16. **Lucky Stiff** by Elizabeth Sims (Alyson)
17. **The Pirate Queen: In Search of Grace O'Malley and Other Legendary Women of the Sea** by Barbara Sjöholm (Seal)
18. **Back to Basics: A Butch-Femme Anthology** edited by Therese Szymanski (Bella)
19. **Without a Net: The Female Experience of Growing Up Working Class** edited by Michelle Tea (Seal)

20. **Intimate Friends: Women Who Loved Women, 1778-1928** by Martha Vicinus (University of Chicago)

Contributors to the 2004 Notable Books list include: Charlotte Abbott, Book News Editor, *Publishers Weekly*; Lucy Jane Bledsoe, author, *This Wild Silence*; Kim Brinster, manager, Oscar Wilde Bookstore; Cheryl Clarke, author, *After Mecca: Women Poets and the Black Arts Movement*; Suzanne Corson, former owner, Boadecia's Books; Katherine V. Forrest, author, *Liberty Square*; Regina Marler, reviewer, *The Advocate*; Catherine McKinley, author, *The Book of Sarahs*; Lisa C. Moore, editor, *Lambda Book Report*; Carol Rosenfeld, co-chair, The Publishing Triangle; Helen Sandler, Books Editor, *Diva* magazine; Carol Seajay, Publisher and Editor, *Books to Watch Out For*; Sara Wan, Editor, *AfterEllen.com*; and Cal Zunt, committee member, GLBT Round Table of the American Library Association.

The Publishing Triangle is an association of lesbians and gay men in publishing committed to furthering the publication of books and other materials written by lesbian and gay authors or with lesbian and gay themes, to creating community for lesbians and gay men working in publishing, and to increase awareness of and appreciation for lesbian and gay literature. <http://www.publishingtriangle.org>.

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What They're Reading in the UK

Each issue Books To Watch Out For checks in with lesbian booksellers to see what's hot, new, and exciting in their part of the world. This issue we looked up the gals at Libertas, the popular U.K. lesbian bookshop turned mail-order/online store. They'd just queried their customers for their best "eye-moistening suggestions" in the romance department. So here's what the romance fans on the other side of the pond are reading. If you can't find the books closer to home, you can, of course, order them from Libertas. Or check their web site for details about any of the books and DVDs.

Libertas' Romantic Reads

I Found My Heart in San Francisco by S. X. Meagher

Curious Wine by Katherine V. Forrest

Tender Heart by Ana P. Corman

Thy Neighbor's Wife by Georgia Beers

Shared Winds by Kenna White

Guarded Hearts by Hannah Rickard

Beyond The Breakwater by Radclyffe

Desert of the Heart by Jane Rule

Bold Coast Love by Diana Tremain Braund

Best Lesbian Erotica 2005 edited by Tristan Taormino

Best Lesbian Love Stories 2005 edited by Angela Brown

Letters of Vita Sackville-West to Virginia Woolf edited by Louise DeSalvo & Mitchell Leaska

The Lesbian Kama Sutra (HB) by Kat Harding

Frauen - Erotische Fotografien by Anja Muller

Do I Love You? DVD

Better Than Chocolate DVD

Claire of the Moon DVD

Check out Libertas' web site for more books, favorites, and information about the 2005 York Lesbian Arts Festival. The site also hosts a series of author interviews, including a recent interview with Stella Duffy on the outrageous cost of medical care in the U.S., as well as interviews with Claire McNab, Sarah Waters, Manda Scott, Val McDermid, Jean Stewart, Lori L. Lake, Katherine V. Forrest, and Cavalier Press founder, Taylor Rickard.

Libertas, which was in York, U.K., during its brick-and-mortar days, is now owned by the Millivres Prowler Group (MPG), the publisher of Diva, Gay Times and The Pink Paper.

You can find them online at <http://www.libertas.co.uk/> or mail Unit 5,

Spectrum House, 32-34 Gordon House Road, London, NW5 1LP. Or call 020 7485 8317. You can find a current list of women's bookstores at www.litwomen.org/WIP/stores.html.



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The Crime Scene

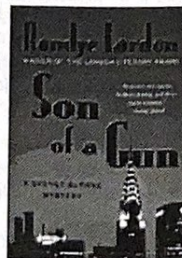
By Nan Cinnater

If Jane Austen wrote swashbuckling adventures, they would read like Madeleine E. Robins' two books, **Point of Honour** and **Petty Treason**, about sword-wielding agent of inquiry Miss Sarah Tolerance. Miss Tolerance is a "fallen woman" living in 1810 London with her aunt, a prosperous madam, but she eschews her aunt's profession in favor of living by her wits and her sword, and the occasional pistol if necessary. Although Miss Tolerance is no Sapphist, she is a sexual free thinker who befriends "mollys" (male prostitutes) and whores, and who strides about in masculine garb the better to ride and to fight. Yet she has a sensitive side. Think Garbo in "Queen Christina" meets Emma Thompson in "Sense and Sensibility." Be still, my heart! These books are so much fun and so well done that I urge you not to wait for paperbacks. Get thee to a library or well-stocked bookstore and snap them up! (Note that the books are best read in order, because Robins gives away the ending of the first, **Point of Honour**, in the course of the second, **Petty Treason**.) Each \$24.95, Forge.



If you crave all things Austen after reading Karen Joy Fowler's *The Jane Austen Book Club* (See BTWOF The Lesbian Edition #7), you may want to check out Carrie Bebris' new mysteries about Mr. and Mrs. Darcy (nee Elizabeth Bennet), **Pride and Prescience** (\$6.99, Forge) and **Suspense and Sensibility** (\$22.95, Forge). Critics say that Bebris' sprightly style and good regency atmosphere make them worth the while of Austenite mystery fans. The master here, however, is Stephanie Barron, who practically channels the voice of Jane Austen in mysteries in which Austen herself is the sleuth. **Jane and the Ghosts of Netley** (\$6.99, Bantam) is newly out in paperback. **Jane and His Lordship's Legacy** (\$24.00, Bantam) will be available March 1. The series began with **Jane and the Unpleasantness at Scargrave Manor** (\$6.99, Bantam).

Moving on to more modern sensibilities...Gertrude Stein once wrote that the detective novel is "the only really modern novel form that has come into existence." Nevertheless, Stein's own mystery novel, **Blood on the Dining Room Floor**, contains no detecting, no clues, and no solution. (Sadly, it's also out of print.) These fun facts are gleaned from **The Gay Detective Novel**, by Judith A. Markowitz. Markowitz researched over 100 series with gay or lesbian characters and conducted interviews with many of the authors. The book is organized by type of hero (private eye, cop, amateur, etc.) and by theme (sexism, homophobia, etc.), but I didn't find that to be the most user-friendly organization. Also, I would love to have read the interviews intact, instead of quotes scattered throughout the text. \$35 paper, McFarland & Company.



Sydney Sloane, the lesbian hero of Randy Lordon's under-appreciated series, used to be a lone-wolf private eye in New York City. Now she is a partner in a full-fledged agency, with a long-term girlfriend and a dog, besides. "Ah, change," as Sydney herself says in Lordon's latest, **Son of a Gun**. Here Sydney balances two very personal cases. After a police captain is critically wounded, his wife, Sydney's oldest friend, confides that she just received a threatening phone call from the son she gave up for adoption twenty years ago.

Meanwhile, Sydney's girlfriend wants Syd to investigate the much-married septuagenarian who is courting her mother. With a strong first-person narrative, twisty plot and rich characters, this literally kept me up late turning the pages. Sydney's previous adventure, **East of Niece** (\$13.95, St. Martin's/Minotaur), is widely available, but many of the seven books in the series are out of print, including the first, **Brother's Keeper**. It's worth checking libraries and used bookstores to fill in the gaps. \$23.95, St. Martin's Minotaur.

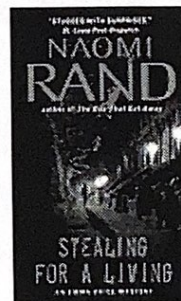
Lori L. Lake is a bestselling lesbian romance writer who has turned to suspense in **Have Gun We'll Travel**. This is the third in the "Gun" series about Minnesota police officers Dez and Jaylynn, following **Gun Shy** (\$18.95) and **Under the Gun** (\$22.95). Despite their titles, the first two apparently emphasized romance over mystery. \$18.95, Quest Books.



Jaime Clevenger's debut, **The Unknown Mile**, is marketed as lesbian romance, but it's also a suspenseful story of intrigue involving a karate-trained heroine and scandal in the "don't ask, don't tell" military. Clevenger opens with a rush of adrenaline in the middle of a car chase, then flashes back, using the nifty device of odometer readings as chapter headings. Unfortunately, the ending is somewhat inconclusive, almost as if Clevenger had used the whole book to set up a forthcoming series. We shall see. \$12.95, Bella Books.

Here's a round-up of some new women detectives who are smart, feminist, politically engaged, and straight. Betty Webb is writing a very socially conscious yet fun series set in Scottsdale, AZ, featuring private eye Lena Jones. In **Desert Shadows**, it's murder at the Southwestern Book Publishers' Expo. Lena gets involved when suspicion falls on her partner's nephew, a Pima Indian. White supremacy, environmentalism, and right-wing publishing are all involved in the investigation. But the mystery of Lena's own origins—she was abandoned at the age of four and grew up in foster care—is perhaps the most compelling. Webb's previous mysteries are **Desert Noir** and **Desert Wives** (\$5.99, Worldwide). \$24.95, Poisoned Pen Press.

Stealing for a Living by Naomi Rand is the second mystery featuring divorced mom Emma Price, following **The One That Got Away**. An investigator for the Capital Defender's Office in New York City, Emma looks into death penalty cases to find mitigating circumstances. She is assigned to an unsympathetic murderer, an anti-Semitic African American who killed his Jewish employers in a rage. But her heart is more involved in the murder of an abortion rights activist, one of Emma's oldest friends. That case is being investigated by Emma's lover, a black police lieutenant. There's a lot going on here, and for the most part Rand deals deftly with ideas, relationships, a complicated plot, and the details of everyday living. A couple of times, though, I felt like I got lost in one of Rand's sentences and couldn't get out. Both books \$6.99, Avon.



In **The Trojan Dog** by Dorothy Johnston, Australian mom Sandra Mahoney has just returned to office work when her (female) boss and mentor is accused of embezzlement, and Sandra tries to exonerate her. One Australian reviewer called it

"a thriller that deals in emotions and ideas while offering the reader a pacy, political plot,...a subtle, absorbing piece about an ordinary woman who is deeply affected by what she uncovers in others and herself." —*The Age*

\$23.95, Minotaur/St. Martin's.

Books to Watch Out For: Coming up in the next issue: new Nevada Barr, new P.J. Tracy, and two from Claire McNab!



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Caught Reading

BTWOF caught up with Pam Houston while she was touring with *Sight Hound*. She'd just finished an advance copy of Elizabeth McKenzie's **Stop That Girl: A Novel in Stories**. Look for Pam's review of it in the *New York Times*. The book she read in the last couple of years that really rocked her heart? **Disgrace** by J. M. Coetzee. "It changed my life," she added.

What do ex-booksellers read? BTWOF asked Theresa Corrigan, former owner of Lioness Books in Sacramento:
"I've been reading like crazy and having a terrific time with it. It's amazing how much time is generated from closing a bookstore and retiring from teaching! Lately I've been reading feminist theory, political theory, and philosophy/current events rather than fiction. I needed something to revive me in the horrendous aftermath of the election. So I've been reading:
The Impossible Will Take a Little While by Paul Loeb
Hope Dies Last by Studs Terkel
You Can't Be Neutral on a Moving Train, Howard Zinn's memoirs - not new but only recently discovered by me.
Ten Little Indians, short stories by Sherman Alexis
Don't Think of an Elephant by George Lakoff - He is a cognitive linguist who has a longer, more in-depth version of this book which I'm just starting.
Global Village Idiot by John O'Farrell- Guess who this one is about?
Favorite recent fiction: **Set This House in Order** by Matt Ruff"



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News Bytes

Books to Watch Out For

Sarah Waters, whose books are perhaps even beloved in Britain than here, has just signed a U.S. rights deal with Riverhead for her forthcoming novel, *Harm*, which tells the story of a group of Londoners during and after WWII, and how their lives were irrevocably changed by the war. Virago is publishing the British edition. Riverhead's hardcover will be published in March 2006. Waters was named Author of the Year in the 2003 British Book Awards for her three Victorian-era novels, *Tipping the Velvet Affinity*, and *Fingersmith*.

Feminist Press History

Cleis Press has an all new web site: One of the best features is Regina Marler's wonderful long interview with Cleis Press founders Felice Newman and Frederique Delacoste about the press' 70s beginnings, history, and present goals and ambitions. "Cleis Press," it begins, "[is] the largest independent queer publishing company in the United States... (and) the only press that is still run by its founders...." Current mission: "We are a press that publishes books for smart readers: lesbians and bisexuals and gays and queer people and transgendered people and heterosexuals." It's a great read. Check it out!

Violet Quill Winner for 2004

Trebor Healey is the winner of InSight Out bookclub's Violet Quill Award for 2004 for *Through It Came Bright Colors*. The award recognizes outstanding debut fiction. ISO staff nominate authors and their books throughout the year, then meet over dinner to discuss each title and determine the winner. "This year," ISO reports, "the night went on for hours. It was a dead heat! Opinions were strong, no one seemed ready to budge, but at last we were all convinced of which single novel should receive the award...."

The other finalists were:

- Naughty Little Secrets* by Mary Wilbon
- Half-Life* by Aaron Krach
- Van Allen's Ecstasy* by Jim Tushinski

Father's Day by Philip Galanes
The View From Stalin's Head by Aaron Hamburger

Caldecott Honors

Congratulations to Jacqueline Woodson for her Caldecott for *Coming On Home Soon*. Woodson's YA novels address a host of issues and shatter stereotypes and silences about all kinds of issues. Her gay YA books include *The House You Pass on the Way* and *From the Notebooks of Melanin Sun* (may be the only novel to present a black adolescent boy dealing with having a gay mother).

Upcoming Contests and Awards

Nominations are due February 15 for the First Annual Golden Crown Literary Society Awards. The awards will honor lesbian novels "of popular and literary merit" written in English and published in 2004. Categories include Mystery/Thriller/Adventure, Sci-Fi/Fantasy/Horror/Speculative Fiction, and Lesbian Romance. The awards will be presented in June. GCLS is a literary and educational organization dedicated to the study, discussion, enjoyment, and enhancement of lesbian literature. More information at <http://www.goldencrown.org>.

Submissions for the Lois Cranston Memorial Poetry Prize are open March 1 through May 31, 2005. The prize honors the *Calyx Journal* editor and includes a \$300 cash award, publication in the Journal, and a one-volume subscription. Chitra Banerjee Divakaruni will judge this year's contest. \$15 per entry reading fee. Details at <http://www.proaxis.com/~calyx/> or write Calyx, PO Box B, Corvallis, OR 97339.

BTWOF Greets the World

And last but not least, our deep and abiding thanks to The Lesbian Herstory Archives for featuring Books To Watch Out For's Community Fundraising Program on the homepage of their website. We are thrilled to be able to support LHA in this way. Organizations interested in learning more about BTWOF's fundraising program should write to mozelle@bookstowatchoutfor.com.

BTWOF is also pleased to have joined Powell's Bookstore's Other Voices program, joining publications such as *The Atlantic Monthly*, *Mother Jones*, and *Salon.com*.

Yours until the next issue,

Carol Seajay
for *Books To Watch Out For*



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