

The Lesbian Edition

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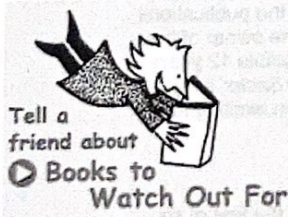
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About BTWOF

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 —

Ms. Magazine

In the information-packed pages of *Ms.*, you'll find global and national news, a calendar of events, ideas to take action, book reviews and analysis of popular culture, media, law, literature, health, environment, and politics — all from a feminist perspective.

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Volume 3 Number 2

Read All About BTWOF!

Check out Michelle Tea's article about **Books To Watch Out For** in the *San Francisco Bay Guardian's* March Lit supplement (Feb 22 issue). She writes a regular column for the monthly Lit supplement that looks at various publishing houses, what they do, and why. It's all in Michelle's inimitable style, and is fascinating reading for anyone who's interested in publishing or looking for the right publishing house for their work.

You can read it online at
http://www.sfbg.com/40/21/lit_househunter.html
 or go to the *SF Bay Guardian's* website and enter "house hunter" in the search box to find her previously published columns:
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If You're Going to Dinah Shore...

...or other lesbian, feminist, or gay events this spring or summer and could take along some **BTWOF** fliers and pass them out, we'd love you forever - and so will the women you'll turn on to **BTWOF**. And it's a great way to strike up a few conversations. Put the fliers on the literature table, post them in the loo, or pass them out: I hate standing in lines, but I love walking up them asking women if they read books. (Someone will almost always hold your place while you do it.) When I get that "*Duh! Does the sun rise in the east?*" look in response I know I'm on the verge of a great conversation. Call us or email Leigh@BooksToWatchOutFor.com or call us at 415-642-9993 if you have a little room in your suitcase for some **BTWOF** fliers and a few minutes to distribute them.

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

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

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

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

BTWOF: The Lesbian Edition

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

Advertising & Sponsorships

BTWOF is financed by subscriptions, rather than advertising or book sales. Publishers and individuals who wish to help launch BTWOF are invited to sponsor any of the first 12 issues. Write to [MoZelle Mathews](mailto:MoZelleMathews@btwof.org) for sponsorship information.

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Lesbianist Publishing

Spinifex Phases Out New Publishing

Australia's **Spinifex Press**, on the heels of its 15th anniversary bash, announced that it will cease signing new books and will focus instead on books currently in the pipeline and on promoting its 170 backlist titles. Spinifex has been a fiercely successful publisher, publishing and distributing globally across a wide range of womanist disciplines from Aboriginal women's rights to global women's rights, from health issues to lesbian fiction.

But why stop now?

Over the past five years, publishers Susan Hawthorne and her partner Renate Klein have watched as feminist publishers around the world have closed their doors. "We resisted this and came up with strategies for increasing our visibility and turnover. We have survived criticism and marginalisation. What we cannot survive is lack of interest from media and all but the best bookshops," Susan writes.

"The media pigeonholes us," she continues, "because our publishing program includes lesbian books. They forget that lesbians play an important role in fostering social justice in Australia and internationally, and they forget that as lesbians we feel the impact of social injustice acutely and that is why we have published across such a broad range of issues, much of which is ignored."

A&M Transitions: New Ownership & New Distribution

Before Anyda Marchant (a.k.a. Sarah Aldrich) died in January, she made provisions for **A&M Books'** Managing Editor Fay Jacobs to assume ownership and to keep the lesbian and feminist publishing company intact; Muriel Crawford, Marchant's partner in life and in publishing, will be Publisher Emeritus. Jacobs had worked closely with Marchant on the last three A&M publications.

Jacob's primary focus has been promoting the press' recently published Ann Allen Shockley novel, *Celebrating Hotchclaw*, and shifting bookstore distribution for all 14 Sarah Aldrich titles and A&M's other titles, to Bella Books, a move that will significantly increase their availability and help to keep Marchant's literary legacy alive. Other projects in the pipeline: a sequel to Jacob's *As I Lay Dying*, A&M's first non-Marchant title, in early 2007.

Girlfriends and On Our Backs Sold

Girlfriends and *On Our Backs* are in the midst of being sold to an unnamed (but probably not Planet Out/LPI) media company. The new owners plan to build on and expand the publications' online presence but do not plan to continue with the print editions. The deal, which includes the magazines' brands, inventory, licenses, copyright to back content, and all online and newsletter properties, is expected to close in late April. Financial problems seem to have been the inspiration for the sale. In January *Girlfriends* filed a lawsuit against the financially troubled Q Television Network for breach of contract and failure to pay for ads placed over the previous six months, but however the lawsuit is resolved, it won't be in time to keep the publications intact. Publisher and Editor in Chief of H.A.F. Publishing, the owner of the two magazines, Heather Findlay concluded, "I had an incredible 12 years with *Girlfriends* and I'm proud to have been part of *On Our Backs'* long tradition of sass and controversy. I think the brands have an exciting future under new ownership and in a new medium."

The Women's Review of Books Is Back

The *Women's Review of Books* returned in January with the first of six 2006 editions. It features a full-color cover, essays by Dorothy Allison (ruminating on plot), Kate Clinton, and yours truly writing on the importance of lesbian pulp fiction. Newsstand distribution is sparse, so you may well have to subscribe to read it: \$33/year from Old City Publishing, 628 N. 2nd St., Philadelphia, PA 19123 or www.wcwonline.org/womensreview.

Lambda Book Report is Returning

The *Lambda Book Report* will return to publication this spring, under the editorship of Lambda Literary Foundation's new Executive Director Charles Flowers. The renewed publication will be a 32-page quarterly and will be published in April, July, October, and January. The first issue will be out in

Housekeeping

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- » whatever has changed.

Finding BTWOF

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

Send books for review consideration for the **Gay Men's Edition** directly to Richard Labonte at
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 Perth, ON K7H 2J3
 Canada.



time for the Lambda Literary Awards presentation, May 18 in Washington, DC, and will feature, among many other wonderful items, an interview with Sarah Waters by yours truly. New subs are \$25 until June 1, \$30 thereafter. Send your check to LLF, 16 West 32nd Street, Suite 10E, New York, NY 10001. More details at: www.lambdaliterary.org.

Judy Wieder Leaves LPI Media

LPI Media loses one of its longtime guiding figures when **Judy Wieder** leaves the company in late March. Bob Cohen, interim president of LPI Media, in an email to PlanetOut staff, announced that LPI does not plan to replace Ms. Wieder and that Cohen, who joined LPI when it was purchased by **PlanetOut**, will assume supervision of all editorial operations.

Wieder was quoted in an *Advocate.com* article as saying that she now understood what people meant when they say they're speechless.

PlanetOut acquired LPI Media, which includes *The Advocate*, *Out* magazine, *The Out Traveler*, *HIV Plus*, and **Alyson Press**, last November for about \$32 million, and these personnel changes would appear to be part of that larger transition.

Wieder became *The Advocate's* first woman editor in chief in 1996 and held the position until 2002 when she became corporate editorial director. Under her leadership, LPI Media partnered with Viacom's LGBT channel, Logo, to create LPI-branded TV programming, including *The Advocate Newsmagazine* series. She is also the executive vice president of the company.

Gay media is facing increasing competition on two fronts, an article in *Ad Age* noted when writing about Wieder's departure — competition from mainstream media that is increasingly including gay content and competition from new gay platforms such as Viacom's Logo network. *Out* reported a 128,000 paid circulation during the second half of 2005; the *Advocate's* paid circulation totaled 121,000. Circulation at both publications was up 9-10%. Alyson Press, under Wieder's direction, moved to New York City last summer and brought in all new staff.

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Tee Corinne

Lesbian photographer, artist, and writer **Tee Corinne** has been diagnosed with liver cancer and, like many a lesbian writer/artist, is a bit underfinanced in the health care department. If you've enjoyed and benefited from Tee's many contributions to our community and would like to make a donation in appreciation or send a card or letter (Tee has requested that people not call or send emails), this would be the best possible time to do so. This would not be the time to procrastinate. Send mail to PO Box 278, Wolf Creek, OR 97497; make checks out directly to Tee Corinne.

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Bookselling

Congratulations to **Kim Brinster** on purchasing the **Oscar Wilde Book Shop**. She has been the longtime manager of the historic New York City store which was founded in 1967 and was the world's first gay bookstore. The store was rescued from closing three years ago when it was purchased by Deacon Maccubbin, the owner of four Lambda Rising bookstores (Washington DC, Baltimore, Rehoboth Beach DE, and Norfolk VA), who has now returned the store to NYC ownership with the sale.

Oscar Wilde is at 15 Christopher Street, New York, NY 10014; 212-255-8097; www.oscarwildebooks.com.

Meanwhile Atlanta's **Charis Books** has taken a promotional leap with its new "Cuddle Up with Charis" online and print marketing campaign. Online

ads feature local authors and ask, "What do you read when you cuddle up with Charis?" Print materials will include postcards and a 2007 *Charis Books and More Revealed* calendar.

For details:

<http://www.chariscircle.org/cuddle.htm>

To watch the commercial:

<http://www.nghosibooks.com/pages/home.htm>.

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Lesbian Literary Events

This year the Publishing Triangle's **Pink Ink** book fair will also feature a LGBT literary conference. Tentative dates are June 9-11. Check the Publishing Triangle's website for details or email pinkink@publishingtriangle.org.

The Publishing Triangle is a NYC-based organization for LGBTQs working in the publishing industry.

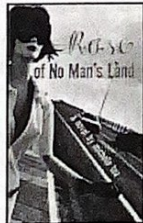
<http://www.publishingtriangle.org/pinkink.asp>

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Finds of the Issue

If I had to choose between *Michelle* Tea's new novel, **Rose of No Man's Land** and first-time novelist Michelle Embree's **Manstealing for Fat Girls** I wouldn't. I'd refuse. I'd just sit down, borrow some attitude from either book, and refuse to budge. Both books are wonderful, both are essential, both are excellent, irresistible reads.

Everyone loves **Rose** – *Publishers Weekly* and *Library Journal* both gave it starred reviews – and for good reason. Michelle Tea gathers all of her



excellent resources and writing skills and takes the reader along on one long day (and night) as 14-year-old Trisha Driscoll meets new people, braves everything, and becomes herself. It's an awesome thing to watch, and it reminds readers – this one at least – how elegant and fragile and unpredictable the whole process is. If I had teenagers, I don't know that I'd have the courage to read this book – but I hope I wouldn't be foolish enough to miss it. (Ditto *Manstealing*). For the rest of us it's a precious look at the evolution of a young woman and a brilliant coming-of-age

novel about a working/poor-class probably-gonna-be-a-dyke young girl. And not to be missed.

A few hints? On something of a dare, Trish's wanna-be-perfect sister scores the disaffected Trish a nightmare of a job at Ohmygod!, the ultimate, trendy teen mall store. Not exactly the best match for our loner girl, but it's there that she meets Rose – Rose with the lesbian mom, Rose who takes on the next dare, Rose who opens the most unlikely – and essential – doors, but it's Trisha who walks, however warily, through them all and into a future she couldn't have imagined, even the day before.

It's the first of the contemporary books about teens that put me inside that first drug experience in a way that made me want to stay and understand and see what would happen next. That made that world not only a part of my world, but one that I welcomed, not for the drugs, but for the understanding of the girls (and boys) who come after me in this ever-emerging, ever-growing lesbian/gay/queer community. Either I've been reading all the wrong books, or Michelle Tea (*Rent Girl*, *The Beautiful*, *Without a Net*, *Valencia*, *The Chelsea Whistle*) does something extraordinary here, with portraying worlds, and world views, and making them accessible to a wide and diverse readership. Somehow, I suspect it's the latter. \$22, 300 pgs, another great book from MacAdam/Cage.

"I flashed on Rose. This would never happen to a girl like Rose. Partly because girls like Rose don't get hired to work at places like Ohmigod!, but still, I couldn't imagine anyone ever trying to make Rose feel small. You know why? 'Cause there's a crucial part of girls like Rose who simply don't show up for it. They're just not available for humiliation. Maybe because they've been raised by lesbian mothers who are totally persecuted all the time so they know how to watch their back. Maybe because they haven't spent their teenage years locked in their room drinking beers and avoiding everyone. Girls like Rose don't avoid anything and so they know how to handle everything. They know how you're supposed to react when some loser like Bernice O'Leary insults you to your face. I didn't know what I was supposed to do. It seemed like not crying would be a good start...."

Manstealing for Fat Girls

Don't be confused by the title. The last thing on sixteen-year-old Angie's mind is stealing other girls' boyfriends so that's what the popular clique accuses her of when they decide to take her down because she's too uppity and doesn't just sit still for their shit. "Lezzylard" is the other thing they call her – and have for years – for being a fat girl with a best friend who's an out dyke.



Angie, like Trisha (see above), has a problem mom with a problem boyfriend. Unlike Trisha, she has a little more community: an aunt with a whiff of sanity, her best friend's irritating big sister, and a wider circle of misfit friends to teach each other both social and survival skills as they navigate friendship, families, the dangerous rush of attraction, the everyday – and sometimes life-threatening – hazards of high school cafeterias and bathrooms, drinking and drugs, and finding a way through, even when every door is slammed shut. Is this a YA novel or a coming-of-age tale? Both. It's not for the faint of heart. But then neither is high school these days. By the end, though, Angie's got her own, and she and her friends have each other's backs. Every kid going into high school should get this book in their survival kit. I find myself giving it to fifty- and sixty-something friends who have good reason to be angry and no place to put it. Did I mention that it's hilarious? I can't wait to see Embree's work-in-progress, *Incarcerated*. \$13, Soft Skull Press.

There should be a horror movie called Cafeteria. A hundred teenagers trapped inside with nothing to do. And when the popular kids get tired of being so wonderful and pretty and cool, they start slowly killing the rejects by eating little slices of them. Little raw slices with sides of powdered mashed potatoes and canned green beans.

If you're parenting teens, read them both – with your kids.

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More Great Reading

Can a book about a funeral be a feel-good read? Yep, if it's Kris Radish's **Annie Freeman's Fabulous Traveling Funeral**, it can. Here Radish (*An Elegant Gathering of White Snows*, *Dancing Naked on the Edge of Dawn*, and *The Birth Order Effect*) gives us a character we never meet, Annie, who spent her last few weeks of dying planning "a traveling funeral" and writing notes to convince her five closest women friends to drop everything in their lives and go. The plane tickets are purchased, the hotels and cars are reserved, and people are waiting to welcome them. Could you refuse? It's the trip Annie can no longer take, visiting the places and people who were most important to her, giving her friends good company with whom to both grieve *and* celebrate her life, and leaving them, ultimately, with refreshed lives and a new net of intimate women friends to take into the rest of their lives. It's a great meditation on living and death and going on.



Wacky, and weird, and the next best thing to a long visit with an old friend. (Good lesbian bits, an essential scene in a lesbian bar, but tasteful enough to give to your mother for Mother's Day.) *TLE* ran into Radish at Michigan last summer where she was simultaneously helping to tend a booth down the aisle and researching her next book. (No, sorry, the traveling funeral gang doesn't stop at the festival, but maybe in her next book, *The Sunday List of Dreams...?*) \$11, paperback original, 330 pages, Bantam.

Lee Lynch Writes Again

Lee Lynch is back after an eight year hiatus with a wonderful exploration of lesbian community in **Sweet Creek**.

Romances certainly have their place, but I'm always much more interested in what happens after that first flush of romance has grown into something with some legs and some history. Lee Lynch takes up these questions and more in **Sweet Creek** as she explores lesbian life in a rural Oregon community. In *Sweet Creek*, Donny and Chick, women well past their mid-life crises (if not all of their hot flashes) run the general store, young women wander in on their way to finding the women's land communities still back in the hills, the closet is still essential for some. Here the fight against Oregon's virulent strain of homophobia is waged one on one and the victories, when they come, grow out of finding common cause and then reaching through to the humanity of one homophobe at a time.



But how can a black dyke from Chicago cope with her anger in white rural Oregon? Can a MTF post-diva find a place in a rural women's commune? And, rock bottom, there's that old problem of making a living while trying to find oneself. Lynch doesn't neglect the back story of Chick and Donny's connection, but it's the everyday ups and downs of the ongoing relationships that fuel this thoughtful and complex slice of life. A good warm read for cold, raining spring nights.

I first read Lee Lynch in the pages of *The Ladder*; later she found her novelist's voice and published, for years, with Naiad. Now, after an eight-year hiatus, it feels like she's come into her own again, in yet another new way, with *Sweet Creek*. Bold Strokes is the publisher, and it's great to see such an interesting new marriage between the new-guard action-adventure publisher and such a classic lesbian writer, and to see Lee with a publisher who can support the depth (and page-count) of her best writing. May they both continue to open interesting new doors for one another. \$15.95, 350 pages, Bold Strokes.

Obsession and Post-Romance

Rebecca Brown reclaims, "the lost art of obsession in lesbian writing" (Joy Parks) with her new short story collection, **The Last Time I Saw You**. This is Rebecca Brown at her dark cynical best, dissecting, slicing, peeling the black holes in relationships, past and present. It's the dark secret – or any twisted truth that, at least for a moment, punctures denial – that interests Brown; her vision is as sharp and spare (and tormented) as her prose. Being Rebecca Brown, she takes you a few leaps of imagination further than you might normally want to go. Still, where else has it ever been written in lesbian literature: "I was the one who didn't do what I said. I was the one who lied"? Twelve stories, in a hundred pages, that will haunt as long as you let them. \$12.95, City Lights.



Community

Lesbian Communities: Festivals, RVs, and the Internet was originally published as an issue of *The Journal of Lesbian Studies*. Haworth is something of a journal factory: it publishes a wide range of journals – about 200 of them – many of which address very specific interests and communities of scholars. The good news is that the mass production aspects make the smallest journals – and the conversations they facilitate – viable. I find it a fascinating model for financing both magazine and book publishing. The frustrating part is that the books that the journals spin off all have a very academic look and feel that can be off-putting for the non-academic reader no matter how interesting the content. But there are often riches to be found if you can wade through the seemingly mandatory abstract at the beginning of each article, the keyword and indexing summaries, the online-access info, and the author credentials to get to the content. Apparently it's written, somewhere in the halls of academe, that none of these things can be

published at the end of the articles.

That said, **Lesbian Communities: Festivals, RVs, and the Internet**, edited by Esther Rothblum and Penny Sablov, offers a rare and thoughtful look at the power and history – and importance – of lesbian community.



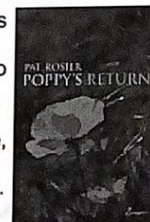
Articles consider many of its manifestations (from brunches to bookstores, from RV parks to activist circles), and at its impact on our lives. Susan Krieger writes about studying and writing about lesbian community (*The Mirror Dance*) 25 years ago and now, Saori Kamano writes about finding and entering the lesbian community in Japan, Elana Dykewomon writes about community changes and institutional memory... but that's just the beginning. Community, wonderful and otherwise, is such a core part of lesbian experience that it's often taken for granted, rather than discussed or celebrated. Hopefully this is the beginning of an ongoing conversation. Essential reading for any woman who values lesbian community and/or has wondered at its changes over the last few decades. Rothblum teaches women's studies; Sablove runs an Aikido school. \$29.95, Haworth/Harrington Park Press.

For a listing of Haworth's Lesbian and gay journals:

<http://www.haworthpress.com/focus/Gay/default.asp?page=jrnl>.

A Good Friday Night Read...

In **Poppy's Return** Pat Rosier (*Poppy's Progress*) continues with the mid-life twists and turns in feminist-intended Poppy's life as she makes her way through, well, trying to do the right thing. (Fortunately, her friends and her wise cat, Mrs. Mudgely, provide perspective.) Rosier, former editor of *Broadsheet*, New Zealand's longstanding feminist magazine, continues to explore the complex truths of lesbian lives. A great low-key read for those who like depth better than flash. Younger lesbians might like the glimpse of what makes those feminist-era lesbians tick. \$17.95, Spinifex.



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Science Fiction — With a Side of Mystery and a Full Serving of Justice

Octavia Butler stole my heart decades ago with *Kindred*. She was a consummate craftswoman and one of the too-few writers who takes race as seriously in science fiction as it is taken in our culture. The MacArthur Foundation, quite appropriately, gave her a "genius" grant a few years back. She died, much too young at only 58, in February (see "Losses" below).

The recently published **Fledgling**, her first book since the Nebula Award winning *Parable of the Talents*, was clearly intended to be the first of a series. If we are very lucky, there's a finished manuscript tucked away, and we'll yet get to read at least the second installment – though **Fledgling** stands on its own just fine. Here Butler gives us a coming-of-age novel of a young black vampire with a growing thirst for justice, for rebuilding the community that was destroyed by a hatred she can't yet fathom, and for resolving the conflicts that generate violence – and for enjoying the sweetly erotic "exchange" (with both women and men) that nourishes and sustains both the vampire and human members of this ancient community. And if you haven't read Jewelle Gomez' *The Gilda Stories: A Novel* (\$14.95, Firebrand), about our original, wonderful, justice-seeking black lesbian vampire, read that next. \$24.95, Seven Stories.



The **Tiptree Award** honors science fiction that explores and expands gender – work that is thought-provoking, imaginative, and challenging. Launched in 1991 by a bunch of crazy feminists (who financed it with bake sales) to honor Alice Sheldon, the pseudonymous James Tiptree, Jr., a brilliant, gender-expanding award-winning science fiction writer herself.

The James Tiptree Award Anthology 1 and 2 (just released) collect many of the winning writings, interspersed with some extremely entertaining (and often profound) essays on the inception, inspiration, and process of

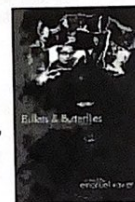
developing this fiercely feminist award. **Anthology 1** (published under the banner "sex, the future, and chocolate chip cookies") includes Joanna Russ claiming the actively heterosexual Tiptree as a lesbian, commentary by Suzy McKee Charnas (on judging and the ever-changing criteria), Karen Joy Fowler and Ursula Le Guin, as well as stories by James Tiptree, Sandra McDonald, Carol Emshwiller, Kara Dalkey, and Kelly Link. **Anthology 2** features work from L. Timmel Duchamp, Carol Emshwiller, Eileen Gun, Nalo Hopkinson, Gwyneth Jones, Ursula Le Guin, and Johanna Sinisalo as well as more great essays and commentary. Both are edited by Karen Joy Fowler, Pat Murphy, Debbie Notkin, and Jeffrey D. Smith. Would that all literary awards were so good humored, well documented, anti-hierarchical, and transparent. I wish I could give these essays to everyone who ever judges any literary award. \$15.95 and \$14.95 respectively, both from Tachyon Publications.

More information about the winners, the short- (and long) lists of writing considered at: www.tiptree.org.

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Of Poets and Poetry

Bullets and Butterflies: Queer Spoken Word Poetry, edited by Emanuel Xavier, starts with Slam, Performance, and Hip Hop poetry to address sexuality, gender, class, race, religion, and politics with work from Cheryle Boyce-Taylor, Staceyann Chin, Celena Glen, Daphne Gottlieb, Alix Olson, Shailja Patel, and many others. \$16.95, Suspect Thoughts.



Women who loved Jackie Kay's *Trumpet*, a novel about a jazz musician who passes as a man for the chance to play, her relationships with her wife's love, and their son's ultimate sense of betrayal (\$13, Vintage), may want to track down a copy of **Life Mask**, Kay's most recent poetry collection. Not surprisingly it focuses on love, loss, and mistaken and secret identities.... It might take some effort to get it – it was published in the U.K. by Bloodaxe, but I found it at both the Women & Children First and Charis websites.

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Lesbian Lives — Or Not

Is there more to be said about Virginia Woolf? The consensus is a resounding "yes!" In **Virginia Woolf: An Inner Life**, Julia Briggs offers a meditation on the nature of creativity along with an intimate study of Woolf's writing process. She traces the creation of Woolf's novels using Woolf's own commentaries on her writing process from her letters, diaries, and essays and explores the contradictions that recur in both her life and her work. \$30, Harcourt.



What's a nice Jewish girl doing in the military? For that matter, what's *any* dyke doing in the military? And more urgently how do they survive and sustain in these "Don't Ask/Don't Tell" times? Zsa Zsa Gershick answers the first question, then interviews lesbian soldiers, sailors, airmen, and Marines, active duty, in the reserves, and retired, to find out. **Secret Service: Untold Stories of Lesbians in the Military** collects those interviews, with introductions, insightful commentary, and sometimes photos, to give us a look at the many variations of dyke-life in the military, and at the many ways women adapt – or can't – to the pressures inflicted by Don't Ask/Don't Tell and other aspects of military life. More



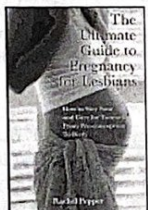
variation on the interview format would have created a stronger structure but, that said, I couldn't bring myself to skip over a single interview. Forward by Col. Margarethe Cammermeyer. \$14.95, Alyson.

Re: **Katharine Hepburn: The Untold Story** by James Robert Parish. Now I can enjoy a dishy, "biography" as much as the next person, and I'm perfectly willing – eager, in fact – to believe that Hepburn preferred the company of women, that she was bisexual if not lesbian, that her relationship with Spencer Tracy was largely platonic, et al, but Parish's combination of recycled innuendo, his very male-centered perspective, and his inability to use the word *feminist* without putting it in quotes coupled with his constant, non-quoted use of "mannish" to describe Hepburn and her friends left me, sadly, with a strong mistrust of all of his information. Just for the record: one can be both a feminist *and* a lesbian. (Hepburn's mother was a very active feminist and, indeed, it would be odd if her fiercely independent daughter was not also a feminist.) Few women's lives are primarily centered on avoiding confrontations with male sexuality and, surprise, lesbians' lives are much more about, *duh*, women, than men..... *Urg!* This book was a great opportunity that was missed. What a loss. \$24.95, Advocate/Alyson.



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Lesbian Parenting / Maverick Moms



The new, revised, updated, second edition of Rachel Pepper's **The Ultimate Guide to Pregnancy for Lesbians** is out. Subtitled *How to Stay Sane and Care for Yourself from Pre-conception through Birth*, it's the ultimate info-source and wise-guide for Moms, would-be Moms, and partners on everything from the latest on sperm banks, choosing a donor, and fertility drugs to sex, desire, and self-esteem during pregnancy; from negotiating family roles to providing legal protection for your family, and much more.

\$16.95, Cleis.

More interested in adoption? **A Love Like No Other** offers a collection of experiences from straight, gay, partnered, and single adoptive parents about their joys, problems, challenges, frustrations and other experiences of adopting and raising their kids in blended, traditional, and not-so-traditional families and dealing with all the issues that come up. Says contributor Jennifer Levin, "[A]dopting children, even when it's extremely difficult, is a lot easier than *raising* children." \$23.95, Riverhead/Penguin.

And what do you tell the kids? In **Mommies, Daddies, Donors, Surrogates: Answering Tough Questions and Building Strong Families**, Diane Ehrensaft, Ph.D, helps parents anticipate the big questions and sort out which answers will work best in each situation. Ehrensaft has worked with families using assisted reproductive technology for twenty years and addresses the needs of both gay and straight parents, single and partnered. \$16.95 Guilford Press.



Oh, and what happens to those poor boys raised in a household without on-premises male parenting? They grow up to be socially savvy, generous, and caring communicators, *and* passionate about sports, and score just fine on roughhousing skills, too. You already knew that, but it's still fun – and insightful – to read the empirical evidence.



Research psychologist and former Stanford University gender scholar Peggy Drexler, PhD has been studying and comparing boys raised by "maverick moms" (two-mom lesbian households, intentionally single moms, and moms single by circumstance) and boys from "traditional" nuclear families since 1996. **Raising Boys Without Men** (written

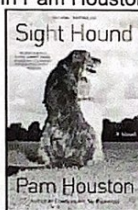
with Linden Gross) is a report on research in progress. What she's found is that, contrary to misogynist and homophobic fears, boys raised in female-headed households often fare better than boys raised in traditional nuclear families, that good parenting isn't gender-based, and that maverick moms are not only changing the face of the American family, their kids are changing our society. And it's a good read. Look for follow-up volumes in the years to come. I can't wait to see if her notion that mom-raised boys, because of their communication skills, are less prone to violence than is "normal" in America.... \$23.95, Rodale.

Want more? Former vice president of PFLAG, Robert Bernstein (*Straight Parents, Gay Children*) supports and salutes same-sex parents and their families and all the ways we're redefining and reclaiming "family values" in **Families of Value: Personal Profiles of Pioneering Lesbian and Gay Parents**. Another good read, and a great book to give the folks when you've just told them they're going to be grandparents. \$14.95, Marlow/Avalon.



And Now in Paperback

In Pam Houston's **Sight Hound** the lesbians are never who you expect, and never as frequent as I'd wish, but it's hard to resist a novel of re-learning how to love (and change and grow and survive loss) where the primary tutor is a wolfhound. I found it such a relief after having read one too many lesbian romances where *The Embittered One* suddenly opens to true love after locking eyes with Ms. Right across a crowded room, that I hardly cared who came next in Rae's life – the exciting thing was that someone would. Kudos to Houston for giving us such a rich novel of transition; mere romances look boring by contrast. \$13.95, Norton.



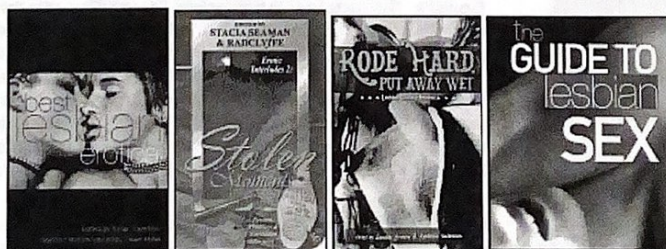
OK, **The Prize Winner of Defiance, Ohio** has been out in paperback for quite a while (as well as out on film), but I just wanted to say that, filmgoers, don't you just *know* that the cute, young thing nervously/proudly chauffeuring her mother around and asking the hard questions is going to grow up to be a dyke? \$13.00 trade paperback from Simon & Schuster; \$7.99 mass market from Pocket Books.



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Clit Lit

By Suzanne Corson



BTWOF asked Suzanne Corson – who was 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.

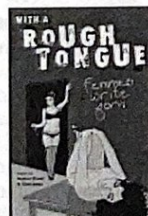
For eleven years, Cleis Press has been publishing their *Best Lesbian Erotica (BLE)* series. Edited by Tristan Taormino with stories selected by guest authors such as Jewelle Gomez, Michelle Tea, and Cheryl Clarke, *BLE* is

known for featuring well-written, cutting edge, genderqueer, kinky, and sizzling stories. The 2006 collection, selected by Eileen Myles, is a great addition to the series. In addition to the now usual variety of gender expressions, flavors besides vanilla, and delicious nastiness, **Best Lesbian Erotica 2006** has the first-ever (that I've seen) reversal of a tired heterosexual male trope in "Riding the Waves" by Rose William, where one woman brings home a bio-boy toy to entertain her female partner. I imagine this would be what *The L Word* could be this season if Tina would encourage Bette to explore her dominant side. But what sets this collection apart from the others for me, besides the temperature staying on Broil consistently throughout the book, is "Silver Dollar Afternoon" by S. Bear Bergman, my favorite of the over one hundred erotica stories I've read while working on this column. The traditional romantic in me was touched and very aroused by this story of a long-term couple's sexual and loving afternoon. The level of intimacy in this story was so well-drawn that it brought tears to my eyes in addition to the moisture generated elsewhere. To get caught up with the series, check out the recently published **Best of the Best Lesbian Erotica 2**. Both \$14.95, Cleis Press.

This year the Bold Strokes Books gals gave us a second volume of their Erotic Interludes series, this time with the common theme of **Stolen Moments**, the title of the collection. If you've ever had a fantasy about making it with a stranger or having a quickie with your lover, you'll find fuel for that fantasy's fire here. Sex on airplanes and trains, in libraries and hospitals, and on break from work can all be found here, written by Friday Night Read and Uber-Xena favorites like Karin Kallmaker, Radclyffe, Jean Stewart, Georgia Beers, and Ronica Black. If you want erotica that's all about women getting it on with women, with some spice mixed in for seasoning, you'll love this collection, edited by Radclyffe and Stacia Seaman. \$15.95, Bold Strokes Books.

Rode Hard, Put Away Wet, edited by Sacchi Green and Rakelle Valencia, is a collection of lesbian cowboy erotica. As someone who has never particularly been drawn to horses, cowboys, or cowgirls, I found that I couldn't read too many stories from this book in one sitting — too many sentences like "No more mutterin' somethin' about somethin'" got to me after awhile (from "Franky and Johnny" by Jake Rich). But I kept getting drawn back to this book because the stories were hot, the characters compelling, and perhaps even because the surroundings (barns, rodeos, ranches, old-west bordellos) are not the usual settings for the erotica I generally read. Pieces I especially enjoyed included "Independence" by Caralee Levy, about a post-Civil War, all-female team of cattle drivers, and Shanna Germain's "Western Pleasure" about the once-a-year reunions of two rodeo riders. \$16.95, Suspect Thoughts Press.

Like the heart-shaped boxes of assorted chocolates that many of these stories mention, **The Perfect Valentine**, a brand-new anthology edited by Therese Szymanski and Barbara Johnson, contains many delicious treats, some soft and sensual on the tongue, others salty or a bit rougher, and unfortunately, a few you may want to spit out. In spite of a couple of stories where the writing isn't, um, up to the caliber of writing in the rest of the book, I really enjoyed the variety of stories in this book, all in some way involved with V-Day. Fantasies fulfilled for long-term couples, as in Denny Evans' "Fantasy Valentine," new lovers coming together for the first time (like "Sweet Thing," a wonderful story by Joy Parks), and reunions for others ("Roses and Strawberries" by Barbara Johnson is one fine example), are among the themes, with a few first-time-ever tales thrown in as well. \$15.95, Bella After Dark.



Though "femmes writing porn" is the subtitle for **With a Rough Tongue**, edited by Amber Dawn and Trish Kelly, not all of the stories feature femmes, nor are all particularly erotic, but all are well-written, empowering, and challenging. This is definitely the most diverse collection of the bunch, in terms of content. From a famous psychiatrist accidentally shooting her receptionist with an arrow ("Dr. Malis and the Risky Venture" by Miss Kitty Galore) to an MTF transwoman giving a blowjob to a bio-male cabbie ("Free Ride" by Miss

Cookie LaWhore), these stories are, as the back cover blurb states, no-holds-barred and transgressive. I was especially impressed by co-editor Amber Dawn's "Fortunate Messes," in which a massage-parlor worker performs cunnilingus on her FTM partner for the first time, just before his phalloplasty, and a poignant first-time story, "Fisherman" by science fiction writer Nalo Hopkinson (*The Salt Roads*). \$16.95, Arsenal Pulp.

Stirring Up a Storm: Tales of the Sensual, the Sexual, and the Erotic edited by Marilyn Jaye Lewis is an eclectic collection of stories by a variety of women — some well-known writers including Dorothy Allison, Margaret Atwood, and Joyce Carol Oates, others by renowned erotica writers like Alison Tyler, Rachel Kramer Bussel, and Lori Selke, and even one by actress Selma Blair (who shared a girl-on-girl kiss with Sarah Michelle Gellar in *Cruel Intentions*). Many of the stories have been previously published, but as a group, it comprises a solid volume of sensual tales. Lesbian content is liberally sprinkled throughout as in Saskia Walker's "Matilda's Touch," "Leitmotifs" by Debra Hyde, and "The Spunk Gun" by Michèle Larue. \$16.95, Thunder's Mouth Press/Avalon.



Violet Blue is the new editor for the *Best Women's Erotica* series, now in its seventh year. The stories in the **Best Women's Erotica 2006** volume seem edgier than usual, more "alternative," especially in terms of the types of groupings, like the lesbian couple who has sex with their brother-in-law in "The Arrangement" by Jean Roberta, and a woman who prowls gay male cruising areas being taken by another woman into the same thing ("Cruising" by L.E. Yates). There are fewer strictly women-loving-women stories than usual, but I astonished myself by being most drawn to the seemingly done-to-death scenario of a young woman modeling for an older male painter, but Cate Robertson's "Just Watch Me, Rodin" was really, really good — and arousing. Color me surprised. \$14.95, Cleis Press.



In addition to the annual erotica compilations, two anthologies of nonfiction writing *about* sex were recently published. My favorite is **Best Sex Writing 2005**, edited by Violet Blue (\$14.95, Cleis Press). Included are articles about working at sperm banks, sex clubs, and escort services; Annalee Newitz's funny story about trolling for sex at a sci-fi convention; and a wonderful piece by Carol Queen about visiting the Kinsey Institute. Other queer writers in the collection include Harlyn Aizley, Patrick Califia, and Michelle Tea. Thunder's Mouth Press put out a similar collection, **The World's Best Sex Writing 2005**, edited by Mitzi Szereto (\$15.95). Highlights include Katha Pollitt's obit of Andrea Dworkin and an infuriating story of gay men, arrested in the forties and fifties, who are on sexual predator lists *today* for having consensual sex with other men back in the day ("The Sex Files" by Ben Ehrenreich).

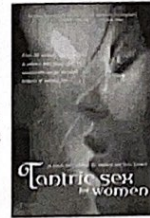
Another collection of writings about sex that is worth checking out is **Everything You Know About Sex is Wrong: The Disinformation Guide to the Extremes of Human Sexuality (and everything in between)**, edited by Russ Kick. At 350 pages, this book is chockfull of things you may have been curious about but didn't know who to ask. And unlike *The Joy of Sex* or the Kinsey reports, this book features essays by people who walk the walk (or at least interview those who do). Public sex, sex during pregnancy and delivery, sex at midlife and beyond, different kinds of pornography, fetishes, polyamory, orgies, sex work, recommended erotica collections, pet names for genitals, anal sex, politics and sex, spiritual sex, and a look at the altered states of consciousness during sex are just some of the categories covered. \$24.95, Disinformation Company.



Are you curious about kink? The newest must-have book on this topic is Midori's **Wild Side Sex: The Book of Kink—Educational, Sensual, and Entertaining Essays**. There are three informative sections: a how-to section with details about specific kinds of play and roles, a similar section that explores different types of fetishes, and a wonderful collection of essays called "The Fundamentals of Kink," where Midori explores philosophy, psychology, protocol, and even some politics, both within and outside of kinky

communities. \$18.00, Daedalus Publishing. (For kinky fiction, check out Cleis's *Best Bondage Erotica 2*, \$14.95.)

I was really pleased to see the U.S. release of German writer Christa Schulte's **Tantric Sex for Women: A Guide for Lesbian, Bi, Hetero, and Solo Lovers**. I had been curious about this subject for years, but I was never able to attend the workshops, and all the books were so focused on the male energy. Besides giving clear explanations of tantric sex, the chakras and how they relate to sex, and great exercises to try, this book has some wonderful explanations of how orgasms differ among women and contains some very fun games. Sex can be transformative, spiritual, and fun, and this book will help you achieve all three. \$15.95, Hunter House.



Speaking of orgasms, last year saw the publication of two hardcover texts on the topic. Elisabeth A. Lloyd's **The Case of the Female Orgasm: Bias in the Science of Evolution** provides an exhaustive overview



of the research on women's orgasms to explore why we have them — unlike men, women's orgasms are not needed to aid reproduction, so we essentially get them just 'cuz. Cool, eh? (\$27.95, Harvard University Press.) If you've ever wanted to learn to become multi-orgasmic, Mantak Chia and Rachel Carlton Abrams give you exercises, anatomy lessons, and philosophy in an informative and effective marriage of Taoist sexual practices and western medical knowledge in **The Multi-Orgasmic Woman: Discover Your Full Desire, Pleasure, and Vitality**. Kind of a dry read, but the exercises are great. \$24.95, Rodale.

And finally, there's Jude Schell's **The Guide to Lesbian Sex**. This book is reminiscent of a work from the past, *The Joy of Lesbian Sex*, with its encyclopedic format. Schell's book includes some edgier entries, such as *kink*, *jill*, and *fuck*. It makes a good first guide for novices, with accessible information on flirting, kissing, and many other components of sex, in addition to a useful resource guide in the back. I did tire of the mostly white, mostly femme, mostly thin women with French manicures in the photos, but it was fun to learn a new-to-me term, *splosh*, for erotic play with food. \$19.95, Hylas Publishing.



Awards

The Lambda Literary Awards

It's full-scale awards season. **The Lesbian Edition** readers have already received the **Lambda Literary Award** finalists as well as the list of all books considered for each category. The Lammy winners will be announced May 18, following a reception at Book Expo America (BEA) in Washington, DC. Details and a full list of nominations at: www.lambdaliterary.org/finalists_LLF_awards.html.

The Orange Prize

I love the **Orange Prize**. It's the British feminist response to seeing great books by women being ignored, again and again, for Britain's high-end literary awards — the Booker and the Whitbread — both of which carry large purses as well as prestige and, face it, book sales. After seeing one too many male-writers-only shortlists for these prizes, they found financing and organized The Orange Prize — a literary award for the best fiction published in English, with a £30,000 (US\$60,000) purse — the largest of any of the literary prizes. Oh, and it's for women only.

The Orange celebrates the diversity of women's writing, brings attention to the issues women writers are addressing in their work, enjoys the controversy it creates, and finances research into the status of women in literature. They've recently launched a **New Writers Award**, as well. The

process is that the judges select a "long list" of books being considered in March, the shortlist is announced April 26, and the winners are announced June 6. The shortlist for the New Writers Award will be announced May 3. The Orange long list (below) always features a wonderful round-up of books. I've *d titles by lesbians or that I know have lesbian content. If I've missed any, do fill me in!

Note: Links below take you to the Orange Prize website descriptions and author biographies. Publishers in the U.S. and Canada may be different than the British publishers.

The Accidental by Ali Smith*
Beyond Black by Hilary Mantel
The Constant Princess by Philippa Gregory
Disobedience by Naomi Alderman
Dreams of Speaking by Gail Jones
Everyman's Rules for Scientific Living by Carrie Tiffany
Frangipani by Célestine Hitiura Vaite
Gilead by Marilynne Robinson
Harbor by Lorraine Adams
The History of Love by Nicole Krauss
House of Orphans by Helen Dunmore
Lost in the Forest by Sue Miller
Minaret by Leila Aboulela
The Night Watch by Sarah Waters*
On Beauty by Zadie Smith
The Position by Meg Wolitzer
Prep by Curtis Sittenfeld
Rape: A Love Story by Joyce Carol Oates
Watch Me Disappear by Jill Dawson
White Ghost Girls by Alice Greenaway

And the ALA Stonewall Award Winners Are...

The **Barbara Gittings Book Award in Literature** goes to Abha Dawesar for **Babyji** (Anchor Books).

The **Israel Fishman Book Award for Nonfiction** goes to Joshua Gamson for **The Fabulous Sylvester: The Legend, the Music, the '70s in San Francisco** (Henry Holt).

The 2006 Stonewall honor books for fiction

Acqua Calda by Keith McDermott (Carroll & Graf)

The First Verse by Barry McCrea (Carroll & Graf)

Mother of Sorrows by Richard McCann (Pantheon)

The Wild Creatures: Collected Stories of Sam D'Allesandro edited by Kevin Killian (Suspect Thoughts)

The Stonewall honor books for nonfiction:

My One Night Stand with Cancer by Tania Katan (Alyson)

Queer London: Perils and Pleasures in the Sexual Metropolis, 1918-1957 by Matt Houlbrook (Univ. of Chicago)

The Secret Life of Oscar Wilde by Neil McKenna (Basic Books)

The Tragedy of Today's Gays by Larry Kramer (Tarcher/Penguin)

This is the thirty-fifth year for the American Library Association's Stonewall Book Awards. The actual awards will be presented at the ALA Conference in New Orleans in June.

The Goldie Finalists

The Golden Crown Literary Society awards prizes in four categories. Winners will be announced at the GCLS convention in Atlanta June 9.

Mystery/Thriller/Adventure:

A Time to Cast Away Pat Welch, Bella

Grave Silence Rose Beecham, Bold Strokes

Have Gun We'll Travel Lori Lake, Regal Crest

Hunter's Way Gerri Hill, Bella

In Too Deep Ronica Black, Bold Strokes

Justice Served Radclyffe, Bold Strokes

The Iron Girl Ellen Hart, St. Martins Press

Turning the Tables Jessica Thomas, Bella

Romance

A Guarded Heart Jennifer Fulton, Regal Crest
Distant Shores, Silent Thunder Radclyffe, Bold Strokes
For Every Season Frankie Jones, Bella
Galveston 1900: Swept Away Linda Crist, Regal Crest
Just Like That Karin Kallmaker, Bella
The Sacred Shore Jennifer Fulton, Regal Crest
The War Between the Hearts Nann Dunne, Intaglio
Unbreakable Blayne Cooper, BookEnds

Sci-Fi/Fantasy/Speculative/Horror

Amicus Humani Generis SB Zarben, P.D. Publishing
Bell, Book and Dyke Barbara Johnson, Karin Kallmaker, Therese Szymanski, Julia Watts, Bella
Call of the Dark Therese Szymanski, Bella
Counterfeit World Judith K. Parker, Intaglio
Dark Dreamer Jennifer Fulton, Regal Crest
No Sister of Mine Jeanne G'Fellers, Bella
Protector of the Realm Gun Brooke, Bold Strokes
The Missing Page Patty G. Henderson, Bella

Debut Author

Course of Action Gun Brooke, Bold Strokes
In Too Deep Ronica Black, Bold Strokes
Misplaced People C.G. Devizei, Intaglio
No Sister of Mine Jeanne G'Fellers, Bella
On the Wings of Love Megan Carter, Bella
Picture Perfect Jane Vollbrecht, Bella
Risky Investment Beth Moore, Bella
The Next World Ursula Steck, Bella

For more information about GCLS:
<http://www.goldencrown.org/>
 And the June convention in Atlanta
<http://www.gclscon.com/>

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Losses

Octavia Butler

Octavia Butler, the much-admired author of *Kindred* and other science fiction tales, died February 24, apparently from congestive heart failure, just outside her home in Seattle. She was 58.

A visionary, and one who always looked at the complexity of oppression in the human condition, Butler's vengeance for social justice was manifest in all of her work, from *Kindred* (250,000 copies in print) through her *Parable* tales and, most recently, *Fledgling*.

Tall, black, lesbian, dyslexic, a self-proclaimed recluse, and a consummate storyteller, she once described herself as "a pessimist, a feminist always, a Black, a quiet egoist, a former Baptist, and an oil-and-water combination of ambition, laziness, insecurity, certainty, and drive." As readers, we simply knew her to be brilliant.

She was the first (and still the only) science fiction writer to receive a MacArthur genius grant. Her other awards include science fiction's biggest award, the Nebula, for *Parable of the Talents*, as well as Nebula short story awards for "Speech Sounds" and "Bloodchild," and a lifetime-achievement award from PEN-America. We already miss the books she didn't get a chance to write; we will be rereading her for the rest of our lives. Check the WBAI archives for an interview with Octavia Butler: www.wbai.org/index.php?option=content&task=view&id=8485&Itemid=42

Sybille Bedford

Sybille Bedford, the author of *A Compass Error* (1968) (which rated an A** in Barbara Grier's *The Lesbian in Literature*), *A Favorite of the Gods*, and *Legacy*, died in London in February at the age of 94. The *New York Times* obituary skipped over her lesbian relationships, as they did with Susan Sontag's, despite Bedford's having written about them in her recent memoir *Quicksand*, which was nominated for a Lambda Literary Award this year in the Belles Lettres category. Bedford married only briefly and for "convenience" to obtain the visa that allowed her to flee to London when the Nazi's discovered that she was part Jewish.

Her lovers included Evelyn Glendel, an American woman who left her husband for Bedford, and a 20-year relationship with the American novelist Eda Lord. Bedford's third novel, *A Compass Error*, which picks up the narrative from *A Favourite of the Gods* (1963), describes the lesbian love affair of one of its characters' granddaughters.

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And Just to End on a Cheerful Note:

A couple in Savannah, Missouri complained that the popular children's book, **And Tango Makes Three**, which features two nest-sitting male penguins who hatch, then raise a baby penguin together, had homosexual overtones. The librarian responded by moving the book from the fiction section to the nonfiction section which, it seems to us here at BTWOF, will make the kids take the story even more seriously. Let's hear it for the librarians in Savannah!

Yours in spreading the words,

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