

The Lesbian Edition

Print It Out

- [PDF of this issue](#)

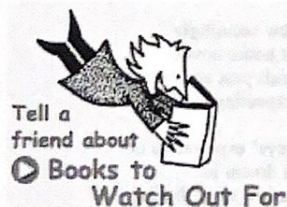
In This Issue...

News

- All Girl Action
- Out on the 'Net
- Feminist Bookstore News
- Lesbian Magazines
- Passings
- Awards
- Writing Wanted
- Spinsters Re-Inks
- *TLE* Interviews Linda Hill
- *TLE* Interviews Sarah Waters

Books

- Novel of the Year
- Finds of the Issue:
- Fiction
- Nonfiction
- Fiction
- Poetry
- Nonfiction
- Lives
- Theory
- Kids
- Pulp To Watch Out For
- New in Paperback
- Romance
- Friday Night Reads
- The Crime Scene



About BTWOF

— This Issue Sponsored by —

Alyson Books

The publisher of
Invasion of the Dykes to Watch Out For
 by Alison Bechdel

Book 11 in the Dykes to Watch Out For series finds Alison Bechdel's beloved cast of characters discovering that nothing but change is constant in our multihued terror-alert-system world.

Volume 3 Number 3-4
 April-May 2006

Welcome to this double-issue of *The Lesbian Edition*. It's so rich with great books and news that it grew and grew until we could hardly get it out the door.

A little news at the top, followed by the books: *TLE's* Book of the Year for 2005, three "Books of the Issue," and many more excellent titles. Skip to the end for Feminist Bookstore and Magazine News, Passings, Awards, Writing Wanted, and an interview with Spinsters Ink publisher Linda Hill.

This issue features ISBNs (International Standard Book Numbers) at the request of a number of readers. If you want them, they're here for you. Everyone else can just skip over the awkward, long numbers at the end of each review. We'll continue to publish them – or stop – depending on feedback.

We'll be back next month with more books, and on May 18 with a quick blitz about the Lambda Literary Award winners.

Yours in spreading the words,
 Carol Seajay

Books To Watch Out For is intrigued that Threshold, Simon & Schuster's new, conservative imprint, hasn't (yet) seen fit to send *Books To Watch Out For* a review copy of Mary Cheney's *Now It's My Turn: A Daughter's Chronicle Of Political Life*, despite our request several months ago. Gee, would that be business as usual, or do they think they'll get a sweeter spin from the (mostly Republican owned) mainstream media?

All Girl Action

Books To Watch Out For was lucky enough to be in New York for what was surely the lesbian literary event of the year: The reception that the new, lesbians-in-publishing group, All Girl Action, organized for Sarah Waters on April 5. It was clearly an event that had been waiting to happen and was the most impressive gathering of lesbian literary energy that I've seen in decades. A good 150 women and a few men squeezed into what had looked like a good-sized brownstone to meet and greet and schmooze.

The party was hosted by Alison Bechdel, Stacey D'Erasmus, Leslie Feinberg, Sarah Schulman, Alison Smith, and Tristan Taormino.

All Girl Action is a brand-new organization, dedicated to celebrating dyke/lesbian literature and culture, and to connecting queer women in publishing and the related arts. Their plan is to have absolutely fantastic parties and interesting events at which writers, editors, literary agents, publicists, et al., can meet up,

Books To Watch Out For publishes monthly e-letters celebrating books on various topics. Each issue includes new book announcements, brief reviews, commentary, news and, yes, good book gossip.

The Lesbian Edition

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

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

The Gay Men's Edition

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

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

More Books for Women

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.

- » [Click here to subscribe.](#)
- » [Click here for more info.](#)
- » [Click here to tell a friend](#) about More Books for Women.

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](#) for sponsorship information.

connect, discover new writers, and have a wonderful time.

All Girl Action organizers are Alyson editor Shannon Berning, reading series curator Cheryl B., Grove/Atlantic editor Amy Hundley, Publishing Triangle steering committee member Michele Kristel, Harmony Books editor Julia Pastore, Publishing Triangle co-chair Carol Rosenfeld, NAL/Penguin editor Liz Scheier, and Carroll & Graf editor (and Honorary Lesbian) Don Weise.

Seventy-five people RSVP'd the first hour after the invitations were emailed. Granted, hosting a reception for a British writer we all admire fiercely was a brilliant organizing strategy, but the incredible response to the event makes it clear that the lesbian literary communities are hungry for chances to get together with other lesbians. Here's to a rich and wonderful future for All Girl Action and their next events.

Publishing professionals (including booksellers and librarians, of course) can sign up for the All Girl Action mailing list by emailing: allgirlaction@gmail.com. Photos: www.flickr.com/photos/cherylb/sets/72057594100408422/.

[back to top](#)

TLE's Novel of the Year 2005

Wild Dogs is the ultimate stealth (lesbian) novel. If introducing this novel to a wider lesbian readership was the only thing I accomplished in two and a half years of publishing this rag, it would be worth it.

Let's start with the PR — while I sympathize with the publicists' dilemma (there's almost nothing you can say about this rich novel without giving something away), the catalog and jacket copy make the book sound like it's about people so sad and lonely that even their dogs won't speak to them. I've spent forty years searching out good lesbian reading and I just couldn't get past the promo until Emma Donoghue wrote, in *TLE's* "Best Books of 2005" issue, "Helen Humphreys' *Wild Dogs* — about a group of people whose dogs have run off to the woods — is a ravishingly written novel about the contrary pulls of danger and home." I bit the bullet, ordered a copy and dove in.

Donoghue is right: This is one of those rare books you haven't read before. Luckily I read it just in time to insist that it be added to the Lammy's Lesbian Fiction shortlist. (Winner to be announced May 18.) So, hopefully, it will yet land in the lesbian reading community.

Humphreys explores the edge between when we think we're wild young things cherishing freedom and independence and that awkward moment when the attraction of the domesticated life begins to frighten, or worse, when we discover we've already failed at settling in. She looks at how people (mostly women, but some others as well) build relationships in the context of the everyday, seemingly banal, damage all too commonly inflicted in our cultures. In the end she redefines success living in that context. That alone would make this a breakthrough novel.

But I also love the way Humphreys plays with the gender of the beloved throughout the initial sections of the book — she certainly kept me on edge for those first 50 pages. Everyone will read this section differently, depending on their own assumptions and experiences, which makes this a perfect reading group book. The relief, when it comes, is a throwaway line from the least expected quarter. Others have used this device before (Jeanette Winterson, Rebecca Brown, and June Arnold come to mind), but here it's an aspect that leads the reader deeper into the book, not the central conceit. Humphreys holds the tension just long enough to keep it interesting.

But more fun, even than that, is her wickedly spare prose. A few seemingly backhanded sentences describe childhoods that others have spent entire novels documenting. A short riff, early in the book, on jobs and boyfriends past and on the confines and traps of each is encyclopedic in its insight. I keep expecting to come across it as a broadside somewhere.

Don't look here for a simplistic, romantic resolution. Humphreys' exploration of loss and betrayal and love is much more complex; her characters dream in conflicting visions, and a single, shared future won't suffice. That's a story that is rarely told, rarely told well, and when it is, the characters are much too rarely women. In Helen Humphreys' *Wild Dogs* we get all three. Paper: June 5, \$13.95, Norton, 0393328422; cloth \$22.95, Norton, 0393060152.



.....

Book of the Issue: Fiction

Housekeeping

If you want to change your BTWOF email address or other contact information, click [here](#) to update:
 » your subscriber profile
 » whatever has changed.

Finding BTWOF

BTWOF is published by Carol Seajay and Books To Watch Out For.
 www.BooksToWatchOutFor.com
 Email: Editor@BTWOF.com
 PO Box 882554
 San Francisco, CA 94188.

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 7-A Drummond St W
 Perth, ON K7H 2J3
 Canada.



The Night Watch just made the Orange Prize shortlist. Sarah Waters has a "cult following" in the U.S., but she is something of a media star in Britain where her "lesbian romps" through Victorian England are read by everyone. Her books routinely make the bestseller lists there — *Fingersmith* hit #7 on the *Sunday Times* bestseller list and stayed in the top 50 for nine months. *The Night Watch* went straight to #1 and stayed in the top 10 for five weeks. Channel Four has already done adaptations of two of her four books. *Fingersmith* was shortlisted for both the 2002 Man Booker and the Orange prizes.

Here in the U.S. of A., *The Night Watch* has, thus far, made the *New York Times* Extended List, went as high as #11 on the Booksense list, hit #9 on the *San Francisco Chronicle* list, #11 at the *Los Angeles Times*, and, interestingly, #3 on the *Denver Post* list and #4 at the *Rocky Mountain News*. This country has some catching up to do — and it's the straight readers, who are behind the curve.

The Night Watch opens in 1947 (quite a departure from her much-loved Victorian romps (*Tipping the Velvet*, *Affinity*, *Fingersmith*) and then Waters moves backwards in time, to reveal an interconnected community of women — and a few men — surviving each day (and night) while London is being bombed during WW II. It's a bit like getting to know a new friend or lover: You meet in the present, then get to know what led her to become the woman she is today — bumps, bruises, and ex's, as well as the good bits — only in this case we get a look at a shifting, evolving network of friends, lovers, and co-workers. It's a fascinating structure, and well used to honor the complexity of both war's impact on "ordinary" individuals as well as society as a whole. (And, I might add, it's a bit of a cautionary tale, for those of us in a country still madly dropping bombs on small villages and now threatening to invade a third Middle Eastern nation.) Being Waters, she gives us the passion of the times, the passions that connect (and occasionally divide), the passions that landed conscientious objectors in jail, and the small kindnesses and betrayals that have such a large effect on individual lives. Kay, the "night watch" ambulance driver, her lovers, Helen and Julia, straight girl Viv, and the not-so-straight C. O. Duncan will all continue to haunt long after the book ends. \$25.95, Riverhead/Penguin, 1-59448-905-X.

For an article on "The Sarah Waters Method of Writing":
www.mslexia.co.uk/v2/interview/interview20.html

For my interview with Sarah Waters, find the just-released debut issue of the newly relaunched *Lambda Book Report*. Details at: www.lambdaliterary.org/lbr.html.

.....

Interview with Sarah Waters

But, of course, while doing the *LBR* interview I asked Sarah Waters a few questions about lesbian publishing — and the publishing of lesbians — on both sides of the pond:

TLE: Where do your books sell better — the U.S., the U.K.?

Sarah Waters: The U.K., definitely. *Fingersmith*, and now *The Night Watch*, have both made it into the bestseller charts. But in the U.S. I get the feeling that my audience is still mainly lesbians. My profile in the U.K., though, was raised enormously by the two BBC adaptations.

TLE: You started your publishing career with Virago and have stayed there.

Why did you choose Virago, and why have you not moved to what we here in the states (however ignorantly) would think of as a more mainstream press?

Sarah Waters: I wish I could say I had 'chosen' Virago. But I was very happy to be bought by them. They were a pioneering feminist publisher when they started; and I still love their commitment to republishing earlier women writers with their Modern Classics list. I've had nothing but good experiences with them. And, because they are part of Time Warner (though soon to be part of Hachette, instead), they have a lot of money behind them, and feel very solid and respectable.

[Editor's note: Virago and ten other publishers all turned the book down when she initially sent the book to them. It still took a year after she got an agent to place the book. Virago bought it after several "more mainstream" publishers turned it down.]

TLE: It seems to me that lesbian writers — both those writing about lesbian topics and those who don't — get much more attention and respect in the U.K. than lesbian writers do here. In the U.K., lesbian writers win awards and

literary prizes, TV & film treatments, are named Officers of the British Empire, and get serious consideration in the press, not to mention getting published with good publicity budgets. Very few (lesbian) writers get mainstream publishing attention here. Would you agree? What are your thoughts on the difference?

Sarah Waters: It certainly seems like there are a lot of very visible lesbian writers doing well in the U.K. at the moment. I'll have to take your word for it that things are different in the U.S., as I don't really know enough about the writing scene there... I think things changed a lot here with Jeanette Winterson. She really raised the bar in lots of ways — she showed everyone, lesbians included, that writing could be lesbian and seriously literary at the same time. My own mainstream success, to be honest, leaves me still a bit surprised. Not because of the lesbian content of my books, though — just because I started off with such small expectations.

Books of the Issue: Nonfiction

Alison Bechdel's **Fun Home: A Family Tragicomic** is nothing short of brilliant. Here Bechdel, who has been chronicling, spoofing, educating, and illuminating both the dyke community and the larger world in *Dykes to Watch Out For* for twenty-some years, uses a new medium — graphic autobiography — to give us an exquisite rendering of one girl's growing up (that would be Alison) in the shadow of a middle-American gothic family, the family funeral parlor, and an immediately-present, emotionally-absent, and ultimately repressed and closeted father. Bechdel is a profound memoirist, telling both the tale and offering a depth of insight rarely seen in even the best of memoirs. Her mix of compressed, careful thought, the carefully selected words, and her excellent graphics combine to tell a story that is at once sweet, intense, and powerful — and so on the mark that she made the hair on the back of my neck stand up. Whew. And, of course, there are moments of great fun.



My advice: Get thee to a bookstore, drop a twenty, then schedule some quality time to spend at the Fun Home. Better yet, get two copies — you're going to want to talk about it with someone, but if you're like me, you won't be willing to let your copy out of sight for awhile.

If America were any less lesbophobic, *Dykes to Watch Out For* would run on every comics page in America. The fact that it doesn't just reflects the high cost of homophobia for straight people: they're deprived of some of the best cultural commentary going. But maybe *Fun Home* will open some doors for them. God willing, and the homophobia don't get in the way, this book is going to win a lot of prizes.

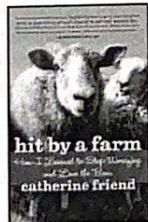
It is, of course, an essential read for any self-respecting dyke, and for gay guys remotely interested in non-urban queer realities or the importance of even semi-queer lit on personal development. But it's a gift for *anyone* who's grown up with a remote, distant parent, survived a parent's suicide or the early loss of a parent as well as any one interested in coming-of-age tales that haven't previously been told, graphic novels, or just profound literature. I dare the *New York Times Review of Books* to take Bechdel on. But in the meantime, I'm sending copies to my straight siblings for Father's Day — even the one who isn't much on reading. He'll find it much more accessible than any traditionally written memoir. \$19.95 hardcover, Houghton Mifflin, 9780618477944.

Check out Alison's blog and some recent *Dykes to Watch Out For* strips:

www.dykestowatchoutfor.com/.

Watch a short video about Alyson's process:

<http://alisonbechdel.blogspot.com/2006/04/videoblogging.html>.

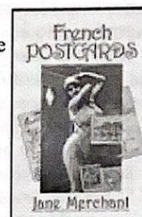


Garrison Keillor and I both agree, albeit for different reasons, that Catherine Friend's **Hit by a Farm: How I Learned to Stop Worrying and Love the Barn** is an irresistible read that neither of us wanted to end. Ostensibly about farming, it's the tale of two women, their 22-year relationship, their commitment to each other's dreams (one to live the clean pristine life of a writer, the other to farm), and their struggles along the way. And we're talking real farming here: crops, animals to market, and, lucky for us, Friend's warm, sometimes hilarious, thoughtful book. City dwellers will learn how llamas protect sheep from predators (who knew?), straight readers will learn that dykes (like any red-blooded farmers) have love affairs with their tractors, and all of us will learn something useful about

nurturing and sustaining the tenacity it takes to launch any brave enterprise. But if you've ever hungered for books about day-to-day realities of long-term lesbian relationships, what makes them work, and what happens in the years *after* you start keeping your underwear in the same drawer, this is for you. And somehow, it's such a wholesome, Midwestern tale, that it would also be a perfect book to give to anyone who can't quite imagine what two women do with each other. I'm thinking about giving it to my farmer brother. He'll like the part about the tractor. Marlowe & Company, \$14.95, 978-1-56924-298-8.

Spinsters Re-Inks

Venerable feminist publishing institution, **Spinsters Ink**, has hit the ground running in its latest incarnation, this time under the care of Bella Books' publisher Linda Hill. The first book, **French Postcards**, is out, and six more titles will come before the year's end.



French Postcards, by Jane Merchant, is a short but leisurely novel set among the wives of Americans working in France. Elinor, unlike most of the others in the conservative American community, is pleased to be in France, is eager to practice her language skills, and is happiest connecting with the local French community. But, deft as she becomes at negotiating a multicultural community, she's more than startled by her own response to the mother of one of her daughter's French classmates. A response that, returned, will cause her to question even deeper ideas about community and culture, and her own assumptions about life, love, and desire. There's no Bella-ever-after ending here, the point is rather the process, the questioning, and the slow, subtle changes that will follow her wherever she goes, for the rest of her life. *French Postcards* was previously published in a short-run edition that didn't receive much attention. \$14.95, 1883523672.

TLE asked Spinsters publisher Linda Hill why she launched Spinsters new incarnation with this novel, what's coming up, and what her plans are for Spinsters Ink. Click here to go directly to the interview.

For TLE's original article on the Spinsters transition:

www.btwof.com/enews_extras/Images13LES/13LES_HTML.html#TotC3.

More info about Spinsters Ink at: www.spinsters-ink.com.

More Excellent Fiction

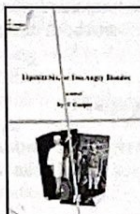


Georgette Collins has lost her memory, and possibly her mind. Kirsten Dinnall Hoyte's novel, **Black Marks**, follows her as she reclaims them both by sorting through memories of her conflicting/colliding worlds — growing up in both her grandmother's home in Jamaica and in her parents' affluent Boston suburb, a childhood caught between black and white parents, an adulthood living mostly gay in a mostly straight world, being a black artist with white lovers and patrons — slowly coming to terms as a daughter, as a sibling, and as herself. It's a demanding read — the timeline is complex and ambiguities refuse to yield to simplistic conclusions. But its challenges are, ultimately, what make it a complex and satisfying read. Published by Akashic Books, it breaks boundaries and expectations in a way that reminded me of the early Firebrand titles. \$14.95, 1-888451-84-X.

Leslie Feinberg, author of the much-loved *Stone Butch Blues*, returns to the world of fiction (at last!) with **Drag King Dreams**. Life in post-9/11 New York City has taken its toll on butch FTM Max Rabinowitz. Max works nights as a bouncer, trying to keep it together day-to-day. It's hard to tell who makes hir life more difficult: the day timers who try to pound hir into their binary-gender-scheme or the post 9/11 "security measures" and the growing governmental harassment. But the murder of a sister cross-dresser, Vicki, forces Max to relinquish hir isolation and reconnect with hir activist past, as cross-dressers, drag queens and kings, and queers of all kinds find new allies across the many cultures being affected by the post 9/11 crackdowns. Together they face down Vicki's death and Max, for



the first time in years, finds his activist heart opening. I daresay it's a mid-life crisis story that hasn't been told before. Feinberg is also the author of *Transgender Warriors* and *Trans Liberation: Beyond Pink or Blue*. \$15.95, Carroll & Graf, 0-7867-1763-7.



There's nary a dyke in sight in T Cooper's **Lipshitz Six, or Two Angry Blonds** — until you come to the "The End" where T writes about being the last living Lipshitz, about her grandmother's obsession with the blond blue-eyed Charles Lindbergh and her belief that he's the son who disappeared as her family left Ellis Island, and about how T's gender disappeared on the back of a book jacket, T's life as a bat-mitvah dj, having a girlfriend's love and support, and burying parents. Or is that all part of the novel? Or is the novel *really* a memoir about the grandparents' escape, with their children, from the Russian pogroms and their subsequent move to Texas? T, in the era of "memoirists" who fictionalize, wisely calls it fiction. That works for us, and it's a rich, interesting read. All in all, it's less reminiscent of T's earlier novel, *Sum of the Parts* than it is of Karen X. Tulchinsky's excellent (but also lesbian-less) *The Five Books of Moses Lapinsky* (\$15.95, Polestar) which takes up the tale of a Jewish-Canadian immigrant family, the long-term damage from Toronto's anti-Semitic Christie Pits race riot, and the effects, on generation after generation, of the guilt that comes from not being able to, personally, prevent and stop senseless violence against one's family and one's people. \$24.95 Dutton, 0-525-94933-X.

Poetry

All of Britain, it would seem, is in love with (lesbian writer) Carol Ann Duffy's book-length love poem **Rapture**. The fact that it's about one woman falling in love with another woman doesn't seem to be causing anyone to lift so much as an eyebrow. It's a Poetry Book Society Choice there, it won the T.S. Elliot poetry prize (think £17,000), and it has garnered raves everywhere.

One of the most important, and rightly loved, poets of our time. —The Independent.

Carol Ann Duffy's new collection is about the loss and rediscovery of love in all its aspects — erotic, intellectual, emotional. —Libertas

*I read it on the tube and missed my station. I read it in bed and couldn't sleep. I read it at my desk and started to cry. Affairs are notoriously disruptive. You get parking tickets, cancel meetings, forget to feed the cat. Reading about an affair is not supposed to have the same effect. But it does in the case of Carol Ann Duffy's **Rapture**.* —Margaret Reynolds (editor of *The Sappho Companion* and the *Penguin Book of Lesbian Short Stories*)

And there you have it.

Published by Picador in the U.K. Not published in the U.S. of A, and no plans to do so that I can uncover. (Far too progressive for this country?) But if you want a copy, — and if you have any passion for poetry at all, you do — you can order her books from the British lesbian e-store, Libertas or from Gay's the Word, £12.99. Read two of the poems:

www.jeanettewinteron.com/pages/content/index.asp?PageID=356

Jeanette Winteron interviews Carol Ann Duffy for *The London Times*:

www.timesonline.co.uk/article/0,,923-1760445_1.00.html

More Nonfiction

If you're going to the Gay Games, don't leave home without a copy of **The Field Guide to Gay and Lesbian Chicago**. It's a chatty, opinionated inside scoop on everything from gay-friendly accommodations and dining to shopping, recreation, music, theater, and the gayist sites to see (from Emma Goldman's grave to the heart of Towertown, a thriving gay enclave in the 20s and 30s.), plus essentials like safety, getting around, and finding the gayborhoods. Compiled by two booksellers who've answered all the tourist questions a thousand times: Kathie Berquist (Woman &



Children First and Unabridged Books) and Robert McDonald (also of Unabridged). \$15.95, Lake Claremont Press, 1893121038. www.lakeclaremont.com

And the new (28th!) edition of **Gayellow Pages**, one of the world's best collections of all things gay from bookstores to women's centers, is out. This edition covers Canada and the U.S.A. 536 pages, \$22.95 paper. Renaissance House, 1-885404-22-0.

You can also access much of the information online at:

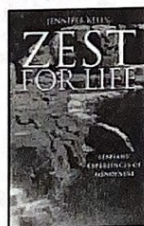
<http://gayellowpages.com>



In Harlyn Aizley's anthology, **Confessions of the Other Mother: Nonbiological Lesbian Moms Tell All**, eighteen women — self-defined Moms, Mamas, Babas, and Other Mothers and performance artists, career queens, nurses, and stay-at-home-moms — write about the non-birth parent's side of the complex dynamic of two-mother families. By turns funny, sad, poignant, and even political (parenting as a subversive activity), it addresses issues as diverse as identity and naming, the lack of public recognition (and strategies for dealing with it), being jealous of the birth-mother/child bonding that nursing creates, dealing with (grand) parents, the grief of infertility, switching roles and becoming the birth mother, and more. Most of the stories address early parenting and pregnancy issues; perhaps there will be a sequel that addresses life in the secondary-school car-pool lane. Aizley is also the author of *Buying Dad: One Woman's Search for the Perfect Sperm Donor*. \$16, Beacon Press, 0-8070-7963-4.

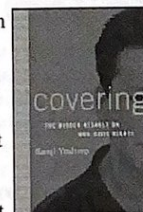
In the latest addition to the Dyke-on-the-Road genre, Lori Soderlind's **Chasing Montana: A Love Story**, a young small-town newspaper woman looks for love and lesbians in all the wrong places — with her best friend at the paper, in a mysterious land that her intended believes in (a much-romanticized Montana now riddled with survivalists), and in ghost towns — and doesn't find them. It's a bit on the frustrating side for both the writer and the reader, but life is about the journey not the destination.

Chasing Montana is an eighties girl's tale of illusions lost and found as she pursues the dream she inherited from a more optimistic generation. \$22.95 paper, Terrace Books/University of Wisconsin, 029921754X.



Given the number of lesbians who go through menopause there's surprisingly little written about it. In **Zest for Life: Lesbians' Experiences of Menopause**, Australian Jennifer Kelly helps remedy that as Kelly considers how lesbians' experience of menopause differs from the mainstream medicalized model, notes how systematically lesbians have been excluded from previous studies and, at least for the duration of the book, puts lesbians' experiences front and center. The research was done in Australia, but the citations and criticisms of previous research are global. It's a tad on the academic side, but the author's commentary on what she was doing and why increase its accessibility. And it's worth skimming over the footnotes to find things like, "More than half of the lesbians in my study (58%) believe that there are different issues for midlife lesbians than for heterosexual women." It was shortlisted for the LGBT Studies Lammy. \$17.95, Spinifex Press, 1876756462.

Kenji Yoshino writes about three phases of identity and oppression in his thoughtful mix of memoir and legal scholarship, **Covering: The Hidden Assault on Our Civil Rights**. He identifies "covering" — the mainstream's demand that minorities be "not so gay, not so black, not so whatever-is-core to one's identity" — as the third phase in the struggle for full human rights and as the next frontier we must tackle. (The first two phases being the demand that we "convert," which was followed by a couple of decades of demands that we "pass.") It all sounds very dry when I write about it, but Yoshino, a gay law professor at Yale, writes a surprisingly warm and personal book that is informed by his feminism and by his acute awareness of many different minority cultures, as well as by his own cultural history and experience. A fascinating and important book that should be well-discussed in the year to come. \$24.95, Random House, 0375508201.





Ah! I love the Queer Encyclopedia series — but hate what a small percentage of attention is given to lesbians and lesbian work. It would seem that, at least in the case of **The Queer Encyclopedia of Film and Television**, if it isn't mainstream, if it doesn't cross over into the male view, it doesn't exist — or at least it doesn't get documented here. Missing In Action are most of the lesbian-made-for-lesbians work of the seventies, eighties, and nineties, the lesbian venues, and lesbian vision. Granted, that's not the work closest to the heart of the editors and the website that inspired this series. But, oh, I wish a big chunk of lesbian history research had been added before the books went to press — it would be a much queerer book with more lesbian content. The series is edited by Claude J. Summers. The first two books, *The Queer Encyclopedia of the Visual Arts* and *The Queer Encyclopedia of Music, Dance, and Musical Theater*, were published in 2004. \$29.95 paper, Cleis Press, 1-57344-209-7.

Lives

Where do woman-friendly sex stores come from? Dell Williams (with Lynn Vannucci) tells about starting and nurturing Eve's Garden, and her life — from her first women's march to her first Hitachi Magic Wand to making the business side work — in **Revolution in the Garden: Memoirs of the Gardenkeeper**. It's funny, full of advice (she's not at all shy about telling readers what they ought to read), and offers a quick course on the impact of the women's movement along the way. \$22.95, Silverback Books, 1596370386.



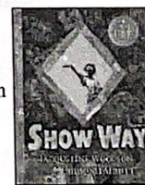
Womanist Theory



The inimitable feminist theologian and theorist Mary Daly (*The Church and the Second Sex, Beyond God the Father, Gyn/Ecology*) is back and is in full form with **Amazon Grace: Calling the Courage to Sin Big**, in which she champions women as saviors of the planet, offers strategies to combat destructive patriarchal forces, and interweaves quantum theory with radical feminism. She challenges women to see them/ourselves as Life-Savers and Life-Enhancers, invokes feminists from the past (most notably Matilda Joselyn Gage), and invents a continent "from the future" where women live in harmony with one another and with nature. Daly is never for the faint of heart, the weary of brain, or the literal minded. She is a universe unto herself. \$24.95, Palgrave Macmillan, 1-4039-6853-5.

For the Kids

Jacqueline Woodson is one of our most brilliant visionaries and writers. She regularly turns stereotypes and expectations inside out, lends support to kids of many experiences, and always gives kids another, wider, way of looking at — well, whatever she has in hand — from her book about a black teenager dealing with his mother becoming a lesbian (*From The Notebooks Of Melanin Sun*), through her recent Newberry Honor Book, **Show Way**. I miss having a bookstore that stocks whatever she writes, gay-themed or not, knowing that she has a cadre of adult fans who will come in and buy anything she publishes.



Single mothers, and lesbian moms will be particularly partial to her Newberry Honor Book, **Show Way** (illustrated by Hudson Talbott), the story of seven generations of women in her family, that reaches back through slavery times, when some of the women were sold away from their mothers, right down through Woodson's own daughter. She writes about how each baby girl was "loved up" by her mother (and by her father if she had one), about the legacy of love and passion for justice passed from generation to generation, along with sewing skills, including

making "show way" quilts that guided escaping slaves to freedom and, in later generations, the skill of making the words that help create that justice. The story ends, "And I grew up, tall and straight-boned, writing every day. And the words became books that told the stories of many people's Show Ways. //Had a baby and named that child Toshi Georgiana.//Loved that Toshi up so. Yes I love that Toshi up.// So some mornings I start all over, Holding tight to little Toshi, I whisper a story that came before her.... // Now Soonie was your great-grand grandma and when Soonie's great-grandma was seven...." And the last pages feature a tall, strong woman, and a baby girl with a fierce presence that any dyke's daughter will recognize as a family like her own. The illustrations are as rich and beautiful as the story. \$16.95 hardcover, Putnam/Penguin, 9780399237492.

Pulp To Watch Out For



Yes, it's true that The Feminist Press will be publishing two of the "Ann Aldrich" (Marijane Meaker) controversial, groundbreaking accounts of lesbian life in the fifties, **We Walk Alone** (1955) and **We, Too, Must Love** (1958). I've been lobbying for years to get this historical series back in print. (There were five of them altogether, concluding with the much more upbeat **Take a Lesbian to Lunch** in 1972.) Back in the day people either loved them or hated them, and that's still true today. I read them at 16 and found them thrilling and affirming. My girlfriend, on the other hand, found them terrifying. But I'll argue, anywhere, anytime, that these books broke new ground, opened new doors for lesbians, and are an essential part of our history that we should all be able to access any time. Hooray for The Feminist Press for bringing them back into print. Look for them in November.

Can't wait that long? Cleis Press has just published two more pulp novels from the day: **Twilight Girl** by Della Martin and **World of Women** by Carol Caine. **Twilight Girl** features a budding butch of the Brylcreem era who fantasizes about a South Pacific island full of women where everyone will be free and accepting (and she'll never have to wear an eyelet blouse again). Instead she finds the Los Angeles' lesbian underworld, and the brilliant and lovely black jazz pianist who already has a girlfriend, and one who wants to keep her.... Today's "sexual outlaws," I tell you, have nothing on the gutsy girls of yesteryear. Both \$12.95, both with lusciously lurid covers....

Now in Paperback

Beautiful Inez, one of my favorite lesbian novels from 2005, puts to rest the whole question of can (and will) presumably straight men write excellent lesbian characters. Bart Schneider's Inez is a brilliant violinist, mother, and wife in a pre-Feminine Mystique San Francisco — everything is perfect except for that gnawing, unnamable, unbearable inner ache. It's a beautifully written book, from the portrayal of those times (including the loud absence of any reason to believe or even hope that a feminist revolution was coming) to Inez' unexpected flirtation with witty, innovative, sometimes-journalist and more often music store pianist, Sylvia Bran. Not at all a romance, the book reads as if the author had spent a number of years puzzling out how a situation, perhaps from his youth, could have come to be. My one criticism would be that the ending seems a bit rushed for the complexity of the dynamics. Still, readers with a deep understanding of the dynamics of women's lives (which would include most *The Lesbian Edition* readers) will recognize the tipping point. (Others will have only an A- reading experience.) It's one of those books that makes you want a reading group to discuss it with. \$14.00, Three Rivers/Random House, (1-4000-5443-5).



To read TLE's review of the hardcover:
www.btwof.com/enews_extras/Images15LES/15LES_HTML.html#TofC5

I just received a note from one of my favorite readers that **The Lavender Scare: The Cold War Persecution of Gays and Lesbians in the Federal Government**, by David K. Johnson is out in paperback. "A fabulous book, with incredible

research," she wrote. It won a Publishing Triangle/Randy Shilts Award for Gay Nonfiction. \$20, University of Chicago, 0226401901.

To read *TLE*'s review of the hardcover:

www.btwof.com/enews_extras/Images8LES/8LES_HTML.html#lives

Romance

I had a wild moment of hope when I picked up Lori Lake and Tara Young's new anthology, **Romance for LIFE**, that it would be a collection of stories about long-term relationships. Nope — but it's something equally fine: it's a fundraiser for the Susan G. Komen Breast Cancer Foundation and the National Breast Cancer Foundation. The title was inspired by Lifetime TV's "Stop Breast Cancer for Life" campaign and all of the writers, editors, and the publisher are donating their royalties and profits. The project grew out of the frustration of not being able to do enough when a friend was diagnosed with breast cancer.



Despite its title, it's more of a cornucopia of relationship stories than specifically romances. The fact that a few of the stories deal specifically with breast cancer or death in lesbian relationships (Gabe Goldsby's sweet confessional, "Best of My Life," Karin Kallmaker's gutsy, "Pas de Trois," and Lori Lake's life-after-life story, "Another Stage") make this a richer, and deeper anthology than most. But I also appreciated the tales of romance-weary butches (Lee Lynch's "After the Second Breakup"), retired women dumping the closet (Nann Dunne's "Dominoes"), and relationships on the mend (Jean Stewart's "Seasons") that enrich the usual mix. Surround them with stories by the likes of Val McDermid, Radclyffe, Ida Sweringen, Stella Duffy, Melissa Good, Elizabeth Sims, Jennifer Fulton, and there goes another evening or two of short pleasures. \$17.95, Intaglio Publications, 1933113593.

Friday Night Reads

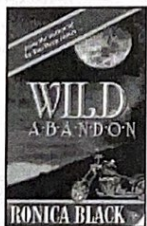
From Suzanne Corson

In Megan Carter's **When Love Finds a Home**, homeless thirty-six-year-old Rona is helping newfound friend Tammy and her four-year-old twin girls find shelter in a San Antonio office building on a stormy night. The two women witness a mugging in a parking lot, interrupt the attack, and take the frightened woman, Anna, to the hospital. Grateful, Anna takes the two unknown women and little girls into her home when she realizes they have nowhere to stay.



Maybe I'm too cynical, but this premise required a huge suspension of disbelief. That aside, I did enjoy the development of Rona and Anna's relationship, the blossoming of Tammy and her daughters in a safe home, watching the women healing from old wounds, and reading a story of two women, already out lesbians, who found their way to each other.

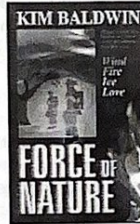
But I found myself wondering if a chapter or two had gone missing somewhere along the line: The back cover blurb refers to a "series of events (that) cast doubt between them" and to Anna making a hasty decision that causes a rift between her and Rona. I did catch a set up for what I suspected would be one of those events, but the event never happened, nor was there any rift. The last part of the book contains little dramatic tension at all. I can't tell if this was a printing error, editing exuberance, or misrepresentation on the back cover, but it was odd. \$12.95, Bella, 1594930414.



The sophomore novel by Ronica Black (*In Too Deep*) is hot, hot, hot. **Wild Abandon** portrays a clash of wills and desire between a motorcycle riding psychologist and a secretive, controlled police officer. Dr. Chandler Brogan's work focuses on sexual dysfunction, but her own relationships need work. She escapes dealing with that by speeding through the countryside on her motorcycle. While out riding with her brother, the two are pulled over for reckless driving by Officer Sarah Monroe. Sarah relishes the control in her life yet knows she wants something more out of her relationships. Chan and Sarah have a brief encounter after a

chance meeting at a bar and can't stop thinking about each other afterwards. There are many side steps and false turns before they connect again but it's well worth the ride.

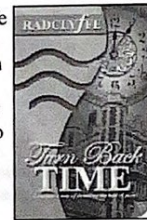
It's a fun read: Chan and Sarah are complex, flawed, likable, and believable; the character development is excellent; and Sarah's police partner, Dan, and Chan's brother and grandmother are wonderful supporting characters. Perhaps Black will revisit all of these great folks in a sequel? \$15.95, Bold Stokes, 193311035X.



More disappointing was Kim Baldwin's **Force of Nature**, which revisits the tired trope of lesbian rescuing a straight woman, suffering through their burgeoning relationship, straight woman experiencing confusing feelings, straight woman doing the come close-push away-come close again dance, but they eventually live happily ever after. But maybe I'm the only one who's tired of these stories, since so many get published? I do give Baldwin credit for taking the time necessary to develop this story; the "coming out" wasn't resolved in fifty pages like so many of the lesbian romances in the nineties. (Publisher Bold Strokes Books

deserves credit, too, for publishing books that are long enough for the authors to fully develop their stories and characters.) But while the premise is a bit tired, the setting is not. Baldwin's characters — volunteer firefighter Gable McCoy and Erin Richards, the woman she rescues in a tornado — live in a sparsely populated and densely forested section of Michigan. The descriptions of the scenery, wildlife, and pace of life in the small town are idyllic and the volunteer firefighters are an entertaining bunch. My fussing about tired tropes aside, if you want to visit a world where everyone truly cares about each other — and the environment around them — you'll enjoy *Force of Nature*. \$15.95, Bold Strokes, 1933110236.

Leave it to prolific author, publisher, and retired surgeon Radclyffe to turn the trope I mentioned above on its ear and send it spinning in a new direction. **Turn Back Time** opens on "Match Day" when medical school students in Philadelphia learn where they will be spending their residency. Wynter Kline and Pearce Rifkin literally run into each other in a meeting they'll both remember for years to come. Four years, to be specific, when the twists of fate and lesbian romance bring them to the same hospital's surgical program.

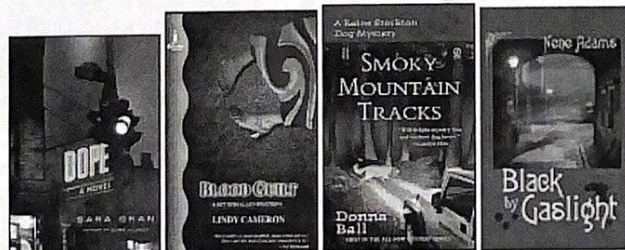


Each woman has secrets, each has some baggage, each is very good at her job, and each has had trouble forgetting the near kiss they shared four years earlier. When they meet again, assumptions, family obligations, and their grueling schedules keep them apart — oh, and then there's the fact that Wynter's never been with a woman. But as I said, this isn't the same ol' same old: Wynter's aware of her feelings from the get go, she just isn't sure what to do about them.

I really enjoyed Wynter, Pearce, Wynter's friends Mina and Ken, and the nearly three hundred pages of entertaining storytelling by the consistently good Radclyffe. You'll probably need more than one Friday night to get through this one, but it's well worth your time. \$15.95, Bold Strokes, 1933110341.

The Crime Scene

By Nan Cinnater



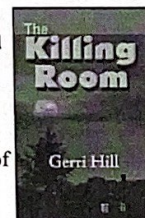
In her new novel, **Dope** (\$21.95, Putnam), author Sara Gran is so hardboiled you could roll her on the White House lawn (as Dorothy Parker once said of Dashiell Hammett). New to the mystery genre, Gran pulls off a near-perfect evocation of *noir* New York City, ca. 1950. Joe (Josephine) Flannigan, a former junkie and hooker, now clean for two years, is making her living boosting jewelry from mid-town stores

when a wealthy attorney and his wife approach her to work for them. The job is to find their daughter, who has gone astray from Barnard and disappeared into the junkies' underworld that Joe knows well. Gran gives us a fascinating tour of that underworld, including strippers, hookers, grifters and cons of all sorts. The plot makes more than one unexpected hairpin turn, and the ending is a killer. Don't say I didn't warn you.

You can't help but feel the love in **Justice Served** (\$15.95, Bold Strokes Books), the fifth installment in Radclyffe's "Justice" series. The major characters include three different lesbian couples, all of them madly, truly, deeply in love, thus generating more sex scenes per page count than any other lesbian novel I can remember. But *Justice Served* is also about friendship, loyalty, commitment and, of course, justice, which is why Radclyffe's band of heroes ultimately won me over. At the center of the complicated plot is the impossibly perfect Detective Lieutenant Rebecca Frye, newly named head of the Philadelphia PD High Profile Crimes Unit. Her team includes her cop partner, a well-drawn straight guy with a high tolerance for strong women; a formidable lesbian computer consultant; and a bashful butch rookie who goes undercover as a drag king. Although many threads continue from previous books, there is a self-contained story — the search for an informant within the department, connected to a mob operation in human trafficking. If you've never tried Radclyffe's blend of passionate sex, high emotion, suspense and well-crafted prose, this is not a bad place to start.

Nene Adams begins her "Gaslight" series with a brilliant premise: a Victorian lesbian detective who literally rivals Sherlock Holmes, solving cases based on real historical crimes. In **Black by Gaslight** (\$17.95, Cavalier Press), consulting detective Lady Evangeline St. Claire rescues a prostitute from an attacker and offers her a position as confidential secretary. Of course the two fall in love. St. Claire's chief rival in detecting is the famous Sherrinford Pike (which Sherlockians will recognize as one of the names Conan Doyle considered for Sherlock Holmes), and it soon becomes clear that the man attacking prostitutes is Jack the Ripper. If anything, *Black by Gaslight* might be a little too Victorian. The plot unfolds slowly, and the romance consists largely of misread cues and misunderstandings, as both heroines muse about their great attraction for the other. In the sequel, **The Madonna of Sorrows** (\$16.95, Cavalier Press), the two are already lovers, so possibly things move more quickly. Here, the plot involves the real theft of a fabulous diamond necklace, *le collier de la Reine*, in Paris at the 1889 World's Fair.

The Killing Room by Gerri Hill (\$13.95, Bella Books) is an excellent (and not overly gruesome) serial killer mystery, wrapped in a fun and believable romance. Denver homicide detective Jake McCoy travels to her mountain cabin for solace and healing after being wounded in a tragic shootout. Meanwhile psychologist Nicole Westbrook prepares for a wilderness hiking vacation... and Hill builds a pleasant tension as we await the inevitable crossing of their paths. Later, a serial killer appears to be targeting Nicole's patients, or perhaps Nicole herself. To her credit, Hill presents Nicole's closeted existence as limited and limiting, in sharp contrast to Jake's tough but no-nonsense life as an out police officer.



In **Grave Opening** (\$12.95, Bywater Books), author Jeanne Harris brings back the eponymous heroine of **Delia Ironfoot** (\$12.95, Chenault and Gray), formerly published by Naiad. A disgraced archaeologist, Delia has built a new life divided between summers as a wilderness guide in Utah and winters with her Navajo grandmother in Medicine Hat. Now she returns to her childhood home in Arkansas, where her grandfather has discovered a burial mound on his farm. The archaeological details are fascinating, but Harris pours on more plot elements, including Delia's dreams of bloody ancient warfare, and two separate romances for Delia, one with an herbalist/folk healer and another with a young archaeologist. Ultimately there is too much going on for a short, fast-moving mystery, and the ending felt unsatisfying.

Blood Guilt by Lindy Cameron (\$13.95, Bywater) is a witty professional private eye novel, set in Melbourne, Australia. Kit O'Malley is hired by eccentric socialite Celia Robinson to tail her husband, who has been taking money from Celia's publishing business and, presumably, spending it on a mistress. Although Kit turns up some strange doings, she doesn't have time to report them before her client is drowned in the goldfish pond. This is my favorite kind of mystery, with just enough personal details (loony mom, critical best friend, The Cat From Hell) to give a taste of the heroine's life, while the emphasis remains squarely on the case. And it helps that the writing purrs along like a classic car engine.

Smoky Mountain Tracks by Donna Ball (\$6.99, Signet) is everything you could want in a paperback mystery and nothing you wouldn't want — crisp, clean prose, engaging characters and setting, a strong plot, and no cutesy-poo gimmicks — in spite of the fact that it's subtitled "a dog mystery." The plot involves a search-and-rescue operation, a golden retriever who's all heart, an animal psychic, and convoluted land deals; and it all comes together neatly in a satisfying ending. The heroine is not apparently a lesbian (she is separated from her husband, a police officer), but she *is* a dog trainer. Enough said.

Briefly Noted

Lost Daughters, the fourth entry in J.M. Redmann's wonderful series about lesbian P.I. Micky Knight, is available in paperback for the first time (\$12.95, Bywater Books). The *San Francisco Chronicle* called this "A sophisticated, funny, plot-driven, character-laden mystery set in New Orleans. As tightly plotted a page turner as they come...."

Idaho Code by Joan Opyr (\$13.95, Bywater Books) begins at the funeral of a man who had disappeared from his small Idaho town twenty years before, then suddenly turned up in the town jail and died while in custody on vagrancy charges. Wilhelmina "Bil" Hardy gets involved with the deceased's daughter and therefore with the mystery — along with her entire "wacky" mixed family of adoptive parents and siblings.



Out on the 'net

Science fiction dyke-writer Nicola Griffith (*Ammonite*, *Slow River*, *The Blue Place*, and *Stay*) talks about writing, lesbian writing, the state of GLBTI publishing, what she's reading, and cites *The Lesbian Edition* in an interview on StrangeHorizon.com: www.strangehorizons.com/2005/20051212/griffith-int-a.shtml

Feminist Bookstore News

Sisterhood Bookstore: The Book

Sisterhood operated in Los Angeles as a feminist, lesbian, and progressive center for 27 years, from 1972 to 1999, with a branch at the Woman's Building in the mid-1970's. Women from all around the country — from community activists and academics to musicians and authors — gathered there for literary and political discussion, networking, poetry and music. Like many other independents, Sisterhood couldn't compete with Internet and chain bookstores. The final blow was Borders opening a store directly across the street.

Sisterhood co-owners/founders Simone Wallace and Adele Wallace (former sisters-in-law), Emily Gold (Simone's daughter who grew up in the bookstore), writer/web-designer Irene Wolt, and educator/author Ronni Sanlo are working on a book to document the life and breadth of Sisterhood Bookstore. They're asking women who passed through its doors — customers, community members, activists; bookstore workers and artists and writers who read or performed there — to send them a sentence, a paragraph, or a chapter on their experiences at Sisterhood Bookstore. Help them out by filling out a quick survey. Details on the Sisterhood Bookstore Project website:

www.inkwellweb.com/Sisterhood/sisterhood.htm to find out more.

Charis Bookstore Staff Changes

After 32 years of feminist bookselling, Charis Bookstore co-founder Linda Bryant is (semi) retiring. She's selling her half of the business and the building to Charis volunteer Amanda Hill; Angela Gabriel, who works part-time at Charis, is also buying into the business. Her buy-in will bring new capital to the bookstore.

Amanda is a home renovator by profession and an electrical engineer by training. Angela is a Pre-K teacher; she'll be keeping her day job for the immediate future.

Long-time store manager and Charis co-owner Sara Luce Look continues on at Charis. She's been at Charis for 12 years. Linda Bryant will continue working one day a week at Charis and part-time at Charis Circle, the bookstore's sister nonprofit that does educational work and funds Charis' programming.

Thriving in Toronto

The **Toronto Women's Bookstore** has just hired feminist bookstore historian Kristen Hogan as their interim manager while Anjula Gogia is on a one year leave. Kristen logged many years at Austin's Women Books before and while completing her dissertation on women's bookstores.

ColorLines ran a great article asking "Why is TWB thriving when so many others have closed?" Their conclusion: It's TWB's fierce commitment to women of color, communities of color and, of course, politics.

"When asked why so many feminist bookstores are closing, [co-manager May] Lui says it's more complicated than just pointing the finger at Amazon and Barnes & Noble. 'If the whole thing about feminism is for white women to access what white men had, a lot of that happened,' Lui says. 'So successful white women will go to the chain bookstores.'"

"[Co-manager Anjula] Gogia also thinks having a woman-of-color definition of feminist affects everything, from what books they stock to the atmosphere of the store. 'When women of color are in a critical mass of leadership, the way we define feminism changes,' says Gogia."

Nine of the twelve staff at TWB are women of color.

Read the entire article at:

www.btwof.com/enews_extras/ImagesLES22/TWB_ColorLines.pdf.

More about *ColorLines*, a wonderful magazine, with a fierce feminist consciousness, addressing race, culture, and action, at: www.colorlines.com/.

Maybe it's just coincidence that all of the senior staff at *ColorLines* are women? But this magazine has some of the smartest articles on women of color, sex and sexuality, work and sexuality, and the interplay with how race and racism affect women's options, how women see themselves, and how the culture sees women that I've seen in a long time. And it's beautifully produced.

Moved:

After a five-month remodel, **Mother Kali's** is open in a gorgeous new space. Store manager Karen Luna writes that about ten San Francisco Bay Area women made donations to their remodeling/moving fund because they didn't want Eugene to lose her store, too. Visit Mother Kali's in Oregon at 1849 Willamette Street, Eugene 97401, (541-762-1077) or online at www.motherkalis.com.

Closed:

Change Makers, the Berkeley bookstore who took over the storefront left when the Mama Bears crew retired and closed the store three years ago, has also closed.

Magazines

Still no word on the future of *On Our Backs* and *Girlfriends*. They've both been bought by an online company that seems much more interested in online publication than print. Details to come when we have them.

Meanwhile, Debbie Wells and Alison Zawacki are launching *Jane and Jane*, "A Home & Family Magazine for Lesbian Lifestyles" for "lesbians who prefer to entertain their friends and family at home to going to the local nightclubs."

It will feature culinary creations, fine wines, investing, family vacations, and articles on maintaining relationships, home decor, outdoor yard projects, fitness and health, and on enhancing your social life with clubs and various activities.

Scheduled to premiere in June. Subscriptions \$12/year. Details at: www.janeandjane.net/subscribe.html.

Celebrate 30 years of *Sinister Wisdom* by donating to *SW's* Thirtieth Anniversary Fund. Keep *SW* in print, keep free copies going to women in prison and psychiatric institutions, and help finance a special 30th Anniversary commemorative issue. Send to *Sinister Wisdom*, PO Box 1180, Sebastopol, CA 95473. Details at www.sinisterwisdom.org.

And check out BTWOF's nifty ad offering 3-month Trial Subscriptions to *More Books for Women*, *The Lesbian Edition*, and *The Gay Men's Edition* in the Spring issue of *Ms. Magazine*. It's on page 71. Or, better yet, send your friends and colleagues straight to our trial subscriptions page at www.btwof.com/TRIAL.

Passings

Lisa A. Barnett — 1958-2006

Fantasy/science fiction writer, Lisa Barnett, who co-authored of *The Armour of Light*, *Point of Hopes*, and the 2002 Lambda Literary Award winning *Point of Dreams* with her partner of 27 years, Melissa Scott, died May 2 after a three year struggle with breast cancer and a metastatic brain tumor.

Lisa — ever the writer — blogged about it all on:

<http://pointsman.blogspot.com/>

The *Boston Globe* obituary:

www.boston.com/news/globe/obituaries/articles/2006/05/07/

lisa_a_barnett_fiction_writer_who_created_worlds_of_fantasy/

Muriel Spark

Muriel Spark, the novelist who wrote *The Prime of Miss Jean Brodie*, died at 88 in April. She lived in Italy with her companion of thirty years, painter and sculptor Penelope Jardine.

For the *London Times* obituary:

www.timesonline.co.uk/article/0,,60-2137315.html

And the *New York Times* painfully discreet obituary:

[http://select.nytimes.com/gst/abstract.html?](http://select.nytimes.com/gst/abstract.html?res=F50A15FE3C5B0C758DDDAD0894DE404482)

[res=F50A15FE3C5B0C758DDDAD0894DE404482](http://select.nytimes.com/gst/abstract.html?res=F50A15FE3C5B0C758DDDAD0894DE404482)

Awards

Orange Prize

This year's shortlist for the **Orange Prize** includes lesbian writers Ali Smith and Sarah Waters. Waters' *The Night Watch* is rich with unabashedly lesbian characters and content. And Ali Smith's *The Accidental? Only the odd kiss or two*. But I think there's a case to be made that it's a work well informed by a lesbian- and outsider perspective, though I can't say I've seen anyone else making that argument. Find the entire shortlist in *More Books for Women* or at: www.orangeprize.co.uk/opf/shortlist.php4.

The Alice B.'s

The 2006 **Alice B. Medals** went to Jennifer Fulton, Claire McNab, Ann Allen Shockley, and Sheila Ortiz-Taylor.

Ex-bookseller **Jennifer Fulton**, who was born in New Zealand, lived in Australia for a number of years, and now resides in the American Midwest, also writes as Rose Beecham and Grace Lennox. She published five novels this year; *Yellow Rose* and *Bold Strokes* are her publishers.

An Australian living in Los Angeles, the extremely prolific **Claire McNab** writes three mystery series and the odd romance (which add up to at least 27 lesbian novels). Alyson publishes her Kylie Kendall series; Bella publishes her Carol Ashton and Denise Cleever titles.

Pioneer Awards, which are intended to go to writers who are no longer publishing, went to Ann Allen Shockley and Sheila Ortiz-Taylor, but both writers proved that you can't keep a good woman out of print by immediately publishing new work:

Ann Allen Shockley was honored for her 70s and 80s titles about black lesbians; but has also recently published a new novel with A&M Books, *Celebrating Hotchclaw*, which tackles internal politics, homophobia, and cross-dressing at a historically black college.

Sheila Ortiz-Taylor, who was honored for her Benbow Trilogy, is publishing a fourth book in the series, *OutRageous*, which will be followed by *Assisted Living*, both of which will be published by Spinsters Ink. She and her partner sued a Florida retirement community for refusing them admission as a couple, and won. Look for *OutRageous* in June.

The Alice B.'s are funded by an anonymous donor and are selected by a group of lesbians in southern Arizona who are avid readers. Writers may receive the medal only once. It recognizes careers distinguished by consistently well-written stories about lesbians. Recipients receive, in addition to the medal, a lapel pin and a check for \$500.

Previous winners include Sarah Dreher, Katherine V. Forest, Ellen Hart, Peggy J. Herring, Karin Kallmaker, and Radclyffe.

The Publishing Triangle & Ferro-Grumley Awards

The Publishing Triangle and Ferro-Grumley Awards honor books published in 2005 in the United States or Canada. This year the Publishing Triangle also sponsored an award for lesbian and gay debut fiction. The winners are indicated with an *.

The Judy Grahn Award for Lesbian Nonfiction

***Tania Katan**, *My One-Night Stand with Cancer* (Alyson Books)
 Gretchen Legler, *On the Ice* (Milkweed Editions)
 Diana Souhami, *Wild Girls* (St. Martin's Press)

The Randy Shilts Award for Gay Nonfiction

***Martin Moran**, *The Tricky Part* (Beacon Press)
 Thomas Glave, *Words to Our Now* (University of Minnesota Press)
 Neil McKenna, *The Secret Life of Oscar Wilde* (Basic Books)

The Audre Lorde Award for Lesbian Poetry

***Jane Miller**, *A Palace of Pearls* (Copper Canyon)
 Djuna Barnes, *Collected Poems with Notes Toward the Memoirs*, edited by Phillip Herring and Osias Stutman (University of Wisconsin Press)
 June Jordan, *Directed by Desire*, edited by Jan Heller Levi and Sara Miles (Copper Canyon)

The Thom Gunn Award for Gay Male Poetry

***Richard Siken**, *Crush* (Yale University Press)
 Frank Bidart, *Star Dust* (Farrar, Straus & Giroux)
 Peter Covino, *Cut Off the Ears of Winter* (New Issues)

The Ferro-Grumley Award for Fiction: Women

***Patricia Grossman**, *Brian in Three Seasons* (Permanent Press)
 Brenda Brooks, *Gotta Find Me an Angel* (Raincoast Books)
 Ivan E. Coyote, *Loose End* (Arsenal Pulp Press)

The Ferro-Grumley Award for Fiction: Men

***Barry McCrea**, *The First Verse* (Carroll & Graf)
 Darren Greer, *Still Life With June* (Cormorant Books)
 Douglas A. Martin, *Branwell* (Soft Skull Press)

The Edmund White Award for Debut Fiction

***Mack Friedman**, *Setting the Lawn on Fire* (University of Wisconsin Press)
 Charlie Anders, *Choir Boy* (Soft Skull Press)
 Katia Noyes, *Crashing America* (Alyson Books)

Also awarded that night:

The Publishing Triangle presented a special **Leadership Award** to **Oscar Wilde Bookshop**, the world's first gay bookstore, now under the care and direction of Kim Brinster.

The **Bill Whitehead Award for Lifetime Achievement** to **Karla Jay**.

The Robert Chesley Foundation's **Lifetime Achievement Award** to **Megan Terry** and the **Emerging Artist Award** to **Kathleen Warnock**. The Chesley Foundation awards honor playwrights.

Writing Wanted

RedBone Press seeks well-written personal stories by black lesbians on the subject of coming out while married to a man and stories from women who are partnered with formerly married women, addressing their point of view surrounding these issues. Journal entries, personal essays, creative autobiographical fiction, poetry, or whatever way the words come. This book is intended to be a resource for black women coming out of marriage and for the women who love them. Deadline: November 3. Write to RedBone for more details: redbonepress@yahoo.com; P.O. Box 15571, Washington, DC 20003.

The Revolution Starts at Home Collective, a collective of Asian and South Asian activists and writers, women, and genderqueers including Ching-In Chen, Dulani, Leah Lakshmi Piepzna-Samarasinha, and Sham-e-Ali al-Jamil, is launching a zine to break the silence about partner abuse in activist communities. Send submissions (with a short bio) or queries to revolutionathome@riscup.net by October 15, 2005.

Kathie Bergquist and Owen Keehnen are looking for submissions for the third annual *Windy City Times Pride Literary Supplement*. This year's theme is "Personal Best: Pushing Boundaries." Features (up to 500 words) will be paid \$25; short form poetry: \$15. Deadline: Monday, June 4. Send up to three of your best

pieces of poetry or prose to WCTLit@gmail.com.

British queer literary journal **Chroma** is launching its first International Queer Writing Competition for short stories and poetry by lesbian, gay, bi, and trans writers. Mark Doty will judge poetry; Ali Smith and Michael Arditti will judge short stories. First prize: £300. Deadline: September 10. Details at www.chromajournal.co.uk.

TLE Interviews Linda Hill **As Spinsters Ink's First Title Is Launched**

TLE: Congratulations on launching your first Spinsters Ink title — the latest in a long history of distinguished Spinsters titles.

Linda Hill: Thank you! We couldn't be more excited. It's taken us about a year to make it all happen, but we are both pleased and excited about the new Spinsters Ink.

TLE: Where did you find *French Postcards*? How did it become the first Spinsters title in Spinsters' latest incarnation?

LH: *French Postcards* was originally submitted to Bella Books long before I had any inkling that we would be picking up Spinsters. The problem, at the time, was that *French Postcards* just wasn't a traditional Bella Book. While the story should certainly appeal to lesbians, it is not what I would consider lesbian fiction. Certainly not lesbian *romance* fiction. So I held on to it a bit and tried to figure out a way to give it a home. Then Spinsters came along and I found the answer.

TLE: What else do you have scheduled in the near future?

LH: This week we have three Jennifer L. Jordan titles coming off press. Jennifer writes the Kristen Ashe mystery series, which will anchor Spinsters' mystery selections. *A Safe Place to Sleep* and *Existing Solutions* are the first two in the series and will join *Commitment to Die*, which we picked up from Beanpole Books last year. *Unbearable Losses* is the fourth in the series and will also be available at the end of May. The fifth title, *Disorderly Attachments*, will be out in the fall. Jennifer is now finishing up book number six.

We couldn't be more excited about the titles coming out this first year. We have some award-winning authors who will be familiar to everyone, including Sheila Ortiz-Taylor and Julia Watts. We also have several books from first-time authors that absolutely captivated us — manuscripts that fell on my desk that I just couldn't quite let go of and that absolutely haunted me.

TLE: What are your goals for Spinsters? How do you see them as being similar and different from Spinsters' previous incarnations?

LH: Our primary goal for Spinsters is to publish quality fiction and nonfiction by and for women. The majority of the titles in 2006 have some lesbian content, but it's not essential for publication.

Probably the biggest difference between now and the previous incarnations of Spinsters is that we are referring to it as a Women's Press instead of a Feminist Press. A subtle distinction. We want our books to be uplifting, entertaining, pertinent, and meaningful. While we want to champion women and issues central to women's lives, we also want to run a profitable business — two goals that can sometimes be contradictory. So we may try to find some balance and select a few titles each year that try to reach a broader audience.

The beauty of Spinsters Ink is that it allows us to publish titles that don't fit the traditional Bella mold — or any other mold, actually. Right now we have no restrictions or limitations, and that's very exciting.

TLE: How many Spinsters titles do you have scheduled for the rest of this year? Next year?

LH: Spinsters will publish 12 titles in 2006. In some ways I find that to be nothing short of amazing when I think of what we've accomplished in one year. We plan on publishing 12 titles in 2007 as well. The market and the manuscripts will always tend to dictate the number of books we publish. I will always try to find a place on the schedule for a good book.

TLE: How many titles is Bella doing this year? Next year?

LH: We are trying to keep to 24 new titles a year with Bella, but somehow that number always seems to grow. There are 30 titles scheduled in 2006. We're trying to maintain a balance between printing new books from our existing authors while introducing new authors as well.

TLE: How is what you're doing with Spinsters different from what you've already been doing with Bella? Why did you want a different publishing company – or is it more of an imprint? – instead of just doing this as part of Bella?

LH: We've kept Bella and Spinsters as two distinctly separate companies for a number of reasons. While they share much of the same infrastructure, they each have such different identities and we want there to be a clear distinction between them. It also gives us a lot more flexibility in terms of personnel and even ownership.

TLE: At the very end of 2004 Bella launched some exciting programs to help support other publishers titles: Bella Bookshelf (which sells books via the Bella Website directly to readers) and Bella Distribution (which sells books to bookstores and wholesalers). How are these programs going? Why did you set them up?

LH: The reason we set up Bella Distribution is because we kept hearing of the struggle small presses were having with getting their books into bookstores. We were in the unique position of having all of the relationships and infrastructure in place; it just made sense to help out wherever we could. So far it seems to be working out well. We're working with nearly a dozen publishers now and have had to slow the growth down a bit while we addressed staffing issues. That tends to be our biggest obstacle so far — finding and keeping the appropriate level of staffing in Tallahassee.

TLE: How is the Bella Bookshelf program affecting sales of Bella titles?

LH: This was a bit of a fear for us, initially. We grappled with it a lot because of course our first priority is to support our own authors. But so far sales of Bella titles haven't really been affected by offering other Publisher's titles as well. Individuals seem to be buying other books in addition to Bella titles — not instead of them. We really just want to get all of the books out there in the marketplace. Ultimately, it will be the reader who decides which books and which publishers do well.

TLE: Is the new warehouse up and running? How much staff do you have? How much does it take to run all these operations?

LH: We are completely set up in our new warehouse, yes. It's taken us a long, long time to hire and train the necessary staff and we just brought the total number of employees in the warehouse to six. We are still probably one person shy of being fully staffed.

TLE: Anything else I should be asking?

LH: No, but check back with me next year — I'm sure we'll be doing something else that's new and exciting. We always seem to be discovering new possibilities. And I seem to have a hard time saying no.

.....

That's it for this issue.
Yours in spreading the words,

Carol Seajay
for *Books To Watch Out For*



© 2006 Books To Watch Out For
Graphics © Judy Horacek

Books To Watch Out For
PO Box 882554
San Francisco, CA 94188
415.642.9993