

The Lesbian Edition

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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.

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 Suzanne Corson.

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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

Volume 3 Number 7

Welcome to the latest issue of *The Lesbian Edition*. You'll find a cornucopia of book news and reviews of an eclectic bunch of books. We hope you enjoy the harvest!

Suzanne Corson

National Book Foundation Honors Adrienne Rich

Adrienne Rich is the recipient of the 2006 Medal for Distinguished Contribution to American Letters "in recognition of her incomparable influence and achievement as a poet and nonfiction writer." The National Book Foundation, presenter of the National Book Awards, also says "For more than fifty years, her eloquent and visionary writings have shaped the world of poetry as well as feminist and political thought." Poet Mark Doty will present the medal to Rich at the 57th National Book Awards ceremony in November.

Mixed Media

For the first time Harper Lee's *To Kill a Mockingbird* is available as an audiobook, read by actress Sissy Spacek. What a perfect choice! Unabridged cassettes: Harper, \$39.95, 9780060888701. Unabridged CDs: Harper, \$49.95, 9780060888695. (*Mockingbird: A Portrait of Harper Lee* by Charles Shields was reviewed in *TLE* #24.)

Plan B has acquired the film rights to Julie Phillips's *James Tiptree, Jr.: The Double Life of Alice B. Sheldon*, which we reviewed in the [last issue](#) of the *Lesbian Edition*.

Save the Date

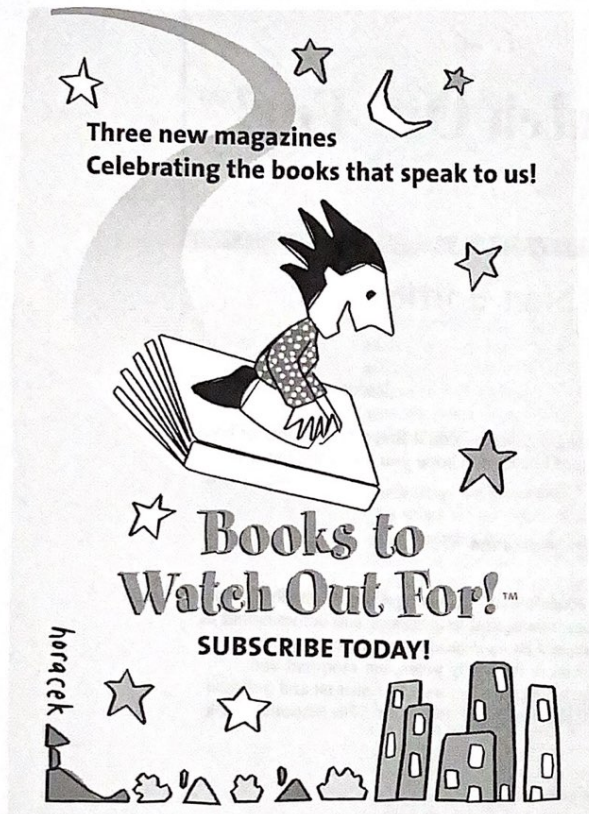
The Lambda Literary Foundation has announced that the 19th Annual Lambda Literary Awards will be held on Thursday, May 31, 2007, at the Katie Murphy Amphitheater at FIT in New York City. In addition, they've announced that there will be a new category for bisexual books. Both fiction and nonfiction books will be eligible for this award. For more information, see www.lambdaliterary.org.

Find of the Issue

Akashic Books is an independent publisher interested in "reverse-gentrification of the literary world." They've published several excellent literary fiction titles including *Southland* by Nina Revoyr, Carol Seajay's *Find of the Issue* in the very first edition of Books To Watch Out For, and Lauren Sanders's *With or Without You* and *Kamikaze Lust*. This month's Find of the Issue is a worthy companion to these books.

A Simple Distance is the debut novel by civil rights attorney





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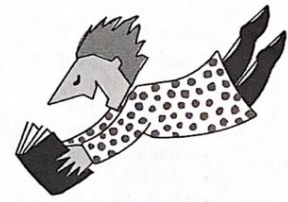
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Books to Watch Out For™ magazines help you get a handle on the best new GLBTQ and women's books.

Each edition of **Books to Watch Out For™** features succinct reviews of literary fiction, non-fiction, kids' books, mysteries and more, with the latest news from the book world compiled by Carol Seajay, Women & Children First bookstore, and Richard Labonte. Available monthly via email or post.

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

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

BTWOF: The Lesbian Edition

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

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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.



K.E. Silva. The personal and political dance together throughout the book as it explores familial tensions, cross-cultural differences, questions of identity, mother-daughter relationships, governmental power plays on a fictional West Indies island, and the very real struggle for queer parental rights in California. Jean Souza, an attorney in the San Francisco Bay Area, is representing Cynthia, a birth mother trying to gain sole custody of four-year-old Sadie, the daughter she raised with her ex, Linda. Shortly before their court date, the California Court of Appeals ruled that second-parent adoptions were no longer valid. This essentially meant that Linda, who Sadie knew as a parent since birth, no longer had any legal claim and would probably be denied custody. The injustice of it as a civil rights issue warred with Jean's awareness that this meant an easy win for her client.

"I printed out the (real-life) *Sharon S.* case, tossed it on the top of Cynthia's file, and left for the day, catching the bus back to Oakland stuck somewhere between disgust and despair. Because when one of us gets burned, we all scar. And right then, I was the one holding the match."

Jean's struggle to reconcile questions of fairness, of right and wrong, of law and justice, in this case she has been assigned are a counterpoint to issues bubbling over in her family. Her mother, a West Indies native who returned to Baobique after thirty years in the states, is grieving the death of her brother George and trying to retain her right to her familial home. Jean reluctantly agrees to go back with her mom to assist her with the issue.

Visits to Baobique are difficult for Jean, bringing light to old wounds and tensions. From her role as her mother's daughter to her identity as a lesbian in a place where homosexuals are criminals, Jean feels challenged and torn.

"When I left my uncle's house that trip, running back to my United States so the part of me that was gay could think straight, I left behind the part that was Baobiquen, as if removing one layer of myself to save another. It was as if I was choosing sides without knowing it, as if I was taking sides against myself."

In *A Simple Distance* nothing is simple. The author weaves multiple threads together to create a striking whole. Edith Forbes (*Alma Rose, Nowle's Passing, Exit to Reality*) calls it "a beautiful example of the American novel - a small and intensely hued piece of the vast mosaic." I'll just add that it's also a work filled with passion, challenge, self-examination, and heart. It's one of those three-dimensional novels that are fulfills the promise of what lesbian literature can be. Akashic Books, \$14.95, 9781933354118.

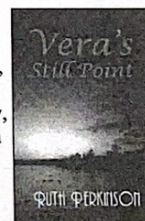
Fiction

Vera's Still Point by Ruth Perkinson is a quiet book about the impact of one woman on another. Forty-year-old Vera Curran is a high school librarian in rural Virginia. She's conservative, celibate, and closeted. She has two close lesbian friends but has not had a romantic interest in many years. She convinces herself she's happy, curling up each night with both her beloved dog Gracie-Mac and a good book.

Then she meets Frankie Bourdon, the newly hired phys ed instructor at the school. Frankie becomes active in the LGBT teachers' association and presses the school board to add homosexuality to the sex ed curriculum. After their first "date," Vera recalls reading a T.S. Eliot piece about still points:

"The still point was a moment of great wonder, great revelation, great meaning - all encapsulated in the far reaches of the mind, the heart, the soul... Eliot suggested that it is at this still point that the dance of life occurs. The dance of life, I thought, I didn't know how to dance. Frankie had nice legs, now there's a still point."

With prose as slow and tangy-sweet as molasses, Perkinson has Vera tell her story to nephew Kyle, who is writing a paper on homosexuality for a psychology class. It is a story of opening up, of feeling and seeing and taking risks, and of loss. A great book to read on the sofa in front of the fireplace with a hot cup of tea. Spinsters Ink, \$14.95, 9781883523732.





Classic movies and music feature prominently in Brenda Brooks' **Gotta Find Me an Angel**. The first-person narrator is a projectionist at a local revival movie house who is haunted - figuratively and literally - by Madeline, her childhood friend and first love who died when they were teenagers. Then our heroine meets Julia and is instantly attracted - but is frozen in place at the thought of doing anything about it. Her roommate, Billie, is interested in Julia, too, which riles the projectionist. The story, told as the projectionist's narrative to Madeline, progresses until she breaks:

"I'm sitting up in the darkened booth behind the projector, just trying to do my job, Madeline - doing my bit to entertain and enthrall the overworked by providing a few reels of escapism for the evening. Funny, isn't it - that this would become the one place I couldn't find refuge at all?"

Quirky characters (Billie reminds me of Jenny from *The L Word*) and humorous prose make this rather heartbreaking story a great read. Raincoast Books, \$21.95, 9781551927176.

In *TLE* #24, we reviewed *Origami Striptease* by Peggy Munson, one of the winners of the first Project QueerLit contest, which resulted in a tie. The co-winner was Alicia E. Goranson's *Supervillainz*.

I can imagine **Supervillainz** in graphic novel form; it's got a cartoon-like feel reinforced by the cover illustration of main characters Bit, a trans woman, and trans man Devon. In *Supervillainz*, a group of vigilantes in body armor with animal-like masks and superhero powers have captured the attention of folks in the Boston area. When one of the "Supas" foils the mugging of Bit and Devon, a crowd from a nearby club gathers to witness the fight between the attacker and the Supa. A gunshot changes the course of events drastically, and Devon and Bit later find themselves in even more danger than the original mugging. Their friends of various gender and affectional stripes help Bit and Devon navigate survival, investigation, and revenge, with some dyke drama-like interactions thrown in for good measure.



Though trans and genderqueer characters - as well as characters who don't embrace the term *genderqueer* - abound, *Supervillainz* is not an issue novel, nor does it preach. It's all about the action, the chase, the gadgetry. However there are references to both the challenges and benefits of being trans, as well as a particularly poignant scene when Bit and Devon meet a teenager who allows them to use his computer at a library:

"Bit focused her gaze on the screen, but she sensed a bound-up scream echoing off her belly from the teen. She could recognize it, as if it had been inside her once... It had not been so long ago when she had her own black shirt and jeans days. Robert was trying to be a boy and failing."

Techno-geeks and fans of action/adventure novels will love the pace, intrigue, and toys in *Supervillainz*. I love books that have an ensemble feel with interesting supporting characters, and this one does have that, but the act of reading it was a bit challenging to my 44-year-old eyes, with its densely packed text in what looks like an 8-point font. Nevertheless, it was fun to read a new action story filled with queer characters that isn't so much *about* them being queer. Suspect Thoughts Press, \$16.95, 9780976341185.



A Fictional History of the United States - With Huge Chunks Missing, edited by T Cooper and Adam Mansbach, is quite a clever anthology, with original stories by multiple authors (Alexander Chee, Amy Bloom, Neal Pollack, Daniel Alarcón, Kate Bornstein to name a few). The introduction explains that it's a fictional counterpart to Howard Zinn's *A People's History of the United States* while also making a convincing argument that all history is fiction.

Though the book does not have a lot of lesbian content (stories by Valerie Miner and Sarah Schulman are excellent, but not lesbian), "Five and Dime Valentine" by Felicia Luna Lemus is so good, I had to mention this collection. Her story is based on the women workers who went on strike at Woolworth's in Detroit, effectively shutting down the biggest store in the city for five days in 1937. Lemus, who wrote *Trace Elements of Random Tea Parties*, begins with Luisa, age 84, buying a present for her lover, Marjorie, on a TV shopping channel. Luisa then thinks back to when she first met Marjorie at Woolworth's. "Five and Dime

"Valentine" is both a sweet love story and a political one, discussing immigration, class, and union issues. Akashic Books, \$15.95, 9781933354026.

Djuna Barnes' **Nightwood** has been released in a new edition with a preface by Jeanette Winterson. She says of it:

"*Nightwood* is itself. It is its own created world, exotic and strange, and reading it is like drinking wine with a pearl dissolving in the glass. You have taken in more than you know, and it will go on doing its work. From now on, part of you is pearl-lined."

If you haven't yet read what William S. Burroughs and others have called "one of the greatest books of the twentieth century," you now have another chance, with the excellent overview provided by Winterson as a bonus. And if you've already read it once and were less than enthused like me, Winterson's right - a second read is a completely different - and for me, better - experience. New Directions, \$12.95, 9780811216715.

New in paper:

The Night Watch, Sarah Waters, Riverhead, \$15, 9781594482304.

The Last Days of Dogtown, Anita Diamant, Scribner, \$15, 9780743225748.



Literary Criticism and Survey

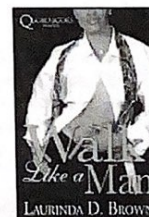


Catriona Rueda Esquibel has given us a real treasure with her book **With Her Machete in Her Hand: Reading Chicana Lesbians**. In addition to an excellent bibliography of Chicana lesbian fiction from 1971-2000, which includes short stories featured in non-lesbian Chicano/a anthologies and various magazines, Esquibel examines some of the iconic figures in the Chicana canon - including La Llorona, La Malinche, and Sor Juana Inés de la Cruz - with a lavender lens. She also looks at how the work of Cherrie Moraga and Gloria Anzaldúa is - and isn't - perceived as lesbian, discusses several plays, stories, and novels in depth, such as *Gulf Dreams* by Emma Pérez, and examines politics, sex, and family relationships as they appear in Chicana lesbian fiction. The scholarship in this book is careful and responsible, and the text is very readable and accessible. Even the notes in the back are worth reading. This is a great addition to the books *about* our literature. University of Texas Press, \$19.95 paper, 9780292712751.



Urban Fiction

Urban fiction, as Alvin Romer notes in an article about this fast-growing genre, "invite(s) potential readers to take a literary walk on the wild side." Predominantly featuring African-American characters, urban fiction titles - sometimes known as hip hop lit - explore the worlds of players and hustlers of all kinds and are often quite sexually explicit. These books *sell*. Authors such as Zane, Nikki Turner, Carl Weber, and Teri Woods, once published by small presses or self-published, are now getting deals from publishers such as Simon and Schuster and Kensington.



Women-loving-women who enjoy urban fiction can now see their sexuality represented in this genre with the new collection of short stories by Laurinda D. Brown called **Walk Like a Man**. Brown, the author of the interconnected novels *Fire and Brimstone* and *UnderCover*, shows an impressive breadth of styles (not just urban fiction), characterizations, scenarios, and moods in this collection. From tough women who own the label "playa" to sorority sisters in corporate America, a wide range of black lesbian love and lust is presented in this book. Gender expression, domestic violence, coming out, sexual abuse, misogyny, and gays in the military are some of the issues explored alongside the love stories, heartbreak, and incredibly hot sex scenes. Of special note are "Dress, Right, Dress," about a long-distance relationship and the impact of a big secret, and "Caught Up," four related stories that explore a courtship between two women - both of whom have girlfriends at home - from each woman's point of view. (A table of contents would have been helpful, since there were a few other stories with characters in common as well.) Part Friday Night Read, part Clit Lit, part urban fiction, Laurinda

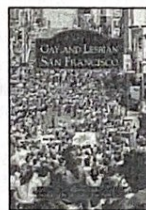
Brown shows many different ways that girl meets girl. Q-Boro Books, \$14.95, 9780977624782.



Sister Q-Boro Books author Anna J. has two books which feature some lesbian love, but unfortunately the plotlines seem to be the modern-day urban fiction equivalent of the old pulps with less than flattering portrayals of the lesbian/bisexual women. The title of the first, *My Woman, His Wife*, gives you the idea. In it, James persuades his wife, Jasmine, to have a threesome with Monica (who James has been secretly seeing on the side for months). After their one ménage à trois, both James and Jasmine secretly continue to see Monica separately. Monica falls hard for Jasmine and makes no secret of the fact that she wants to take Jasmine from James. Jasmine, on the other hand, loves her husband and her life with their four-year-old twins, but is blown away by the incredible sex with Monica. Eventually an event orchestrated by Monica results in the couple's separation. In *The Aftermath*, the recently released sequel, we learn more about Monica's past and why she's become such a conniving woman. Her interactions with other lovers, including a drug kingpin, are explored as well as her continued association with Jasmine and James. Both books, which feature equal parts straight and lesbian sex scenes, will probably appeal more to bi-curious straight women than lesbians or bisexual women. While it's nice to see some woman-loving in urban fiction, it's a shame that these two books so strongly reinforce the evil-lesbian/evil-bisexual stereotype. Both Q-Boro Books, \$14.95. *My Woman, His Wife*: 9780975306628. *The Aftermath*: 9780977624744.

Nonfiction

Bitch magazine was created in 1996 by Lisa Jervis and Andi Zeisler, then twenty-something women who wanted to sound off about feminism in pop culture and media. From DIY zine to the magazine that is now available on newsstands all over the U.S. and Canada, this periodical is celebrating its tenth anniversary with a new anthology, *Bitchfest: Ten Years of Cultural Criticism from the Pages of Bitch Magazine*, edited by Jervis and Zeisler. With an introduction by Margaret Cho and several pieces written specifically for this collection, *Bitchfest* covers everything from lesbian kisses on TV and young adult lesbian novels to depictions of female masculinity in film. There are many queer-themed essays throughout the chapters on body image, puberty, identity, love and sex in marketing, and activism among others. For some reason, most of the pieces I especially appreciated are from 2002: "Are Fat Suits the New Blackface? Hollywood's Big New Minstrel Show" by Marisa Meltzer (Winter 2002), "I Can't Believe It's Not Feminism: On the Feminists Who Aren't" by Julie Craig (Spring 2002), and "The God of Big Trends: Book Publishing's Ethnic Cool Quotient" by Noy Thrupkaew (Spring 2002). This book can be a fun trip down memory lane for those who've been along for *Bitch's* ten-year ride or an opportunity to see what you've been missing – and can look forward to in the future – if you haven't yet seen *Bitch*. Farrar, Straus and Giroux, \$16, 9780374113438.



Do you know about the wonderful collections of old-time photographs from various regions by local history publisher Arcadia Publishing? They combine hundreds of photographs with pithy captions on subjects as broad as *Key West and the Florida Keys* to the specificity of *Hockey in Seattle*. They've just published their first lavender-tinged title, *Gay and Lesbian San Francisco* by Dr. William Lipsky. Spanning from the men who came to California to seek gold and the women who came to escape the repressed East Coast of the 1800s, to the 2005 Pride Parade, these images are true treasures. Lipsky does a great job of weaving lesbian and gay stories in with events from California, U.S., and World history to explain why San Francisco became known as "Bohemia by the Bay." It would have been nice to have more than a few photos on the rich women's community centered near Valencia Street in the eighties and nineties, but I do applaud Lipsky for his awareness of and explanation about the scarcity of photos of women from the early days covered by the book. This would make a great gift for anyone who appreciates queer history. Arcadia Publishing, \$19.99, 9780738531380.

New in paperback:

A Love Like No Other: Stories from Adoptive Parents, Pamela Kruger and Jill Smolowe, Riverhead, \$15, 9781594482151.

Raising Boys Without Men: How Maverick Moms Are Creating the Next Generation of Exceptional Men, Peggy Drexler, Rodale, \$14.95, 9781594865381.

Fantasy

Rye Woods works multiple jobs in order to support herself and her teenaged sister, Holly. To do so, she foregoes a personal life until she meets a dryad named Flora. In spite of their class differences - Rye barely makes ends meet while Flora is a wealthy and successful artist - and their different species, they quickly form an intense bond. But Rye has a few secrets - she's a fairy in a society that finds fairies to be freaks, and she and her sister are in the country illegally. Like many fantasy tales, L-J Baker's **Broken Wings** explores the issues of racial, social, and cultural differences using different species. This is an entertaining tale of an inter-species relationship between two women of different financial brackets. The exploration of Rye's responsibility for her sister is also well done. Holly's a great character with typical teenage angst and ambitions that are unknown to Rye until Flora comes on the scene. For a lesbian romance with fantastical elements, you'll enjoy the nearly three hundred pages of *Broken Wings*. Bold Strokes Books, \$15.95, 9781933110554.

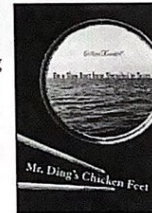


Back in Print:

Future Dreams: Tales of Emoria, Book 1 (9780975955550) and *Present Paths: Tales of Emoria, Book 2* (9780975955567) by T.J. Mindancer, both \$11.95 from Bedazzled Ink / Mindancer Press.

Lives

A boat traveling from China to the U.S. is definitely a unique setting for a coming out novel, but **Mr. Ding's Chicken Feet: On a Slow Boat from Shanghai to Texas** by Gillian Kendall is being marketed as such, in addition to its more obvious identification as a travel memoir. At the age of thirty-one, Gillian takes a job as an English instructor for a boat full of Chinese men who will work alongside Americans once the boat reaches Texas. Gillian, between jobs and schools, leaves her boyfriend behind when she accepts this month-long gig. During the course of the journey, Gillian realizes that what she feels for him is more fraternal than passionate, and what she really longs is for more female energy in her life. Being the only woman among all those men might do that for anyone, but for Gillian it was more than that.



"In between the stretches of relationships with men, there had been a few flashes of romantic brightness: twice in college, and once since then, I'd been with women. Those few times came back to me often in dreams, or in daydreams. With those women, I'd felt an intensity, a fervor like the kind that men seemed to feel."

The author, who has traveled extensively, has interesting insights about how people from different cultures adapt to each other and how adults learn new-to-them languages. University of Wisconsin Press/Terrace Books, \$22.95 paper, 9780299219444.



If you read the "not lesbian but fiercely feminist" *Baghdad Burning: Girl Blog from Iran* by the blogger known as Riverbend (Feminist Press, \$14.95, 9781558614895), reviewed by Carol Seajay in TLE #15, you'll be sure to want the sequel. **Baghdad Burning II: More Girl Blog from Iran**, with an introduction by James Ridgeway and Jean Casella, begins as the U.S. is about to elect a president in late 2004. Riverbend worries about what it will mean, for both Iraq and the U.S., if Bush is re-elected, and post-election finds many of her fears realized. She also discusses the recent elections in Iraq, the decline in status for women there, the contradictory instructions Iraqi citizens receive from the various governmental

agencies, and how they can tell about the status of the war by what produce is available. One of the later entries, in January 2006, touches on the kidnapping of journalist Jill Carroll and memorializes her murdered Iraqi translator, Alan, who, it turns out, was a friend of Riverbend's. Disturbing, important, compelling reading. Feminist Press, \$14.95, 9781558615298.

New in paper:

Virginia Woolf: An Inner Life, Julia Briggs, Harcourt, \$16, 9780156032292.

Clit Lit

Rachel Kramer Bussel has edited and contributed stories to numerous erotica anthologies and her passion for the genre is evident in her new anthology **Glamour Girls: Femme/Femme Erotica**. She has collected stories about femme women who are "unapologetic about wanting other femmes," and her introduction, which is definitely worth the read, explains that part of her goal is to prove that femmes with femmes is not "air on air." These stories also disprove the tired joke that all femmes do with each other in bed are their nails.



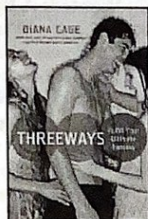
One thing I appreciate about this anthology is that unlike most erotica collections, several of these stories are *long* (such as "The G-String" by Jen Collins and "The Game" by Alison Tyler), allowing the reader to sink into the characters, enjoy the buildup, the tension, and of course, the release. From bi-curious college students to dykes in their forties who already know what they want and how to get it, each story shows the many different ways women are femme and how they express their desire for other femmes. I especially liked "Gumshoe in a Cocktail Dress" by Shelley Rafferty, "Sugar" by Diana Cage, and "Cup Cake" by Tanya Turner. Bussel says it best in her intro: "Masculinity, whether in male or butch form, doesn't have to be part of our lesbian construct of desire, and we should not have to solely be defined by its absence." What she said. Harrington Park Press, \$16.95, 9781560235347.



A recurring fantasy for many women who work at offices or stores is an impromptu encounter with a striking delivery driver - something about a woman in uniform and the taboo of having sex at work... In **Sign on the Line** by Jaime Clevenger (*The Unknown Mile*), we get to hear about it from the delivery person's point of view. Alexis works for a shipping company in Portland, Oregon, and is not shy about flirting with the women along her route. The flirtations often lead to hot encounters after hours. She is also drawn to Darcy, a woman who lives in her building. But when Darcy hooks up with one of Alexis's occasional friend-with-benefits, Alexis starts to question whether she wants to "settle down" with someone or if she wants to continue being sexually free and unattached. This internal debate heats up when two women in particular compete for attention in Alexis's mind, heart, and libido. Yet another delicious erotic entry from Bella's After Dark imprint. But I have to say, I especially enjoyed the author's dedication: "To all my friends, thanks for the dyke drama, and yes, I changed your names. To all my exes, thanks for teaching me the tricks, and yes, I made you better in bed..." Bella Books, \$13.95, 9781594930522.

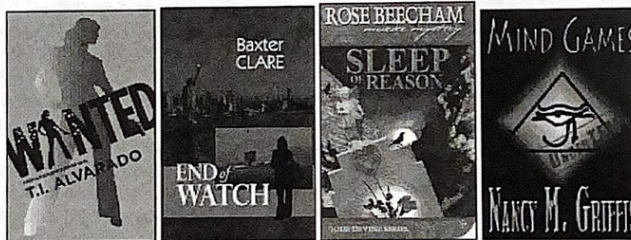
"True confession"-type erotica collections are not generally my favorites, since the stories often seem more cheesy than spicy. I was pleasantly surprised by **After Midnight: True Lesbian Erotic Confessions**, edited by Chelsea James, although since it was published by Cleis, I should have guessed it would be good. Their erotica collections pretty consistently feature good writing by a diverse group of writers who explore heat-inducing scenarios, and *After Midnight* is no exception. Favorites of mine include "Geek Chic" by Gina Klein, about finding a woman at an Apple computer store, the naughty schoolgirls of "My Lesbian Sex Confession" by Teresa, and the sweetness of "Scars" by Nell Stark, in which the narrator's partner caresses the scars resulting from surgeries and accidents as part of their foreplay. Cleis Press, \$14.95, 9781573442404.





The description of *My Woman, His Wife* (above) notwithstanding, threesomes *can* be positive experiences for many people. Diana Cage, former editor of *On Our Backs* magazine and author of the best-selling *Box Lunch: The Layperson's Guide to Cunnilingus*, explains how in her latest book **Threeways: Fulfill Your Ultimate Fantasy**. In spite of the unfortunate cover with the stereotypical photograph of one guy with two women, this book is jam-packed with great information and advice - for threeways, yes, but also about dating, sex, and relationships in general: how to deal with jealousy, the importance of communication, how to find partners, and learning to figure out what you really want. There are also anatomy and etiquette lessons, sexual technique tips, information about sex parties, and specific advice for both singles who want to hook up with a couple and couples who want to find a third to join them, whether short or long term. The examples and quotes Cage uses are from all kinds of folks: dykes, gay guys, trans persons, and bisexual men and women. Diana Cage, who also edited *The On Our Backs Guide to Lesbian Sex*, once again gives queer women information we can use for more fulfilling sex lives. Alyson, \$15.95, 9781555839390.

The Crime Scene By Nan Cinnater



It's so rare that I have the scoop on anything that I'm going to start with a bit of literary gossip. Fans of author Nicola Griffith and her icy-hot Norwegian-American detective Aud Torvingen will be happy to know that the third Aud Torvingen novel, *Always* (following *The Blue Place* and *Stay*), will be published by Penguin on April 5, 2007. The catalogue copy says, in part:

"Aud Torvingen is back - contemporary fiction's toughest, most emotionally complicated noir hero returns to teach a new round of lessons in hard-hitting justice, and to confront new adversaries: her own vulnerability and desire."

On October 2, 2006, Nicola Griffith herself added the following in a post to "BluePlace," a listserv about GLBT mysteries (more on that below):

"I've been working on this book [*Always*] for three years, and it's now essentially two novels woven together - so it's big (about 600 pp, I think; it hasn't been typeset yet - much, much longer than anything I've tried before). I can't wait to finally see it in print.

"And that bit about 'desire' per the catalogue copy is absolutely right. The book's stuffed to the gills with sex and drugs and rock and roll. Oops, nope, I ended up cutting the karaoke scene. Okay, substitute violence. Aud kicks butt and takes names (and phone numbers...).

"Anyway, I had a blast, as does Aud. Eventually. I hope that on April 5th readers do, too."

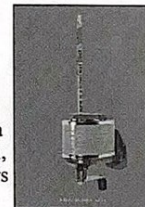
For more about *Always* and everything else about Nicola Griffith, see her website, www.nicolagriffith.com. The listserv quoted here is called "BluePlace" after Nicola's own novel but is not affiliated with her. It is a great vehicle for writers, readers, editors, reviewers, and all who are interested in gay and lesbian mysteries. You can find out more at www.pauahitun.org/mailman/listinfo/blueplace.

On to some new lesbian mysteries that are available right now at your local independent bookstore.

Janet Evanovich meets *Mr. and Mrs. Smith* in **Wanted: A Bird Blacker Bounty Hunter Mystery** by T.I. Alvarado. Combining violent suspense with wacky humor is harder than it looks. Alvarado is not entirely successful, but the action moves fast and some likeable characters help to carry it. Hispanic heroine "Bird" Blacker is an ex-L.A. cop, now a bounty hunter, and a closeted lesbian. (Why closeted, I wonder; it's not like this is meant to be a realistic picture of the modern lesbian.) Bird has her hands full, with a visit from her twenty-year-old baby sister, a "skip" who turns out to be the son of a mob boss, and not much help from her goofy hippie partner. Oh, and her sexy one-night stand turns out to be with a hired assassin. Alyson, \$14.95, 9781555839451.

I'm a sucker for hard-drinking detectives, but I like them even better if they can manage to get and stay sober. In **End of Watch** by Baxter Clare, LAPD Lieutenant "Frank" Franco has finally quit drinking. In an effort to make her peace with the past, she returns to New York City to visit her mother's grave, and discovers a new lead about her father's murder. The New York details and ambience are strong, and Clare introduces a great new character, NYPD detective Annie Silvester. There are welcome romantic complications with Frank's ex, Gail, for whom she still has feelings. Occasional chapters appear as excerpts from Frank's journal (the daily writing required by her AA sponsor), shedding more light on Frank's character and showing both her vulnerability and humor. *End of Watch* may well be my favorite entry in Baxter Clare's outstanding series, which consists of *Bleeding Out* (soon to be reissued by Emmis Books, \$14.95, 9781563411441), *Street Rules, Cry Havoc*, and *Last Call* (all \$12.95, Bella). I hope Frank Franco is with us for a long time to come. *End of Watch*, Bella, \$13.95, 9781594930645.

Lynn C. Miller also incorporates journal excerpts in her new lesbian mystery, but you can bet she would call them "metafictional devices." **Death of a Department Chair** purports to be a narrative "edited" by the main character, yet told in the third person, with additional documents such as the victim's diary entries. The whole thing works both as a classic whodunit and as a wicked parody of academia. Our "editor" and chief sleuth, Miriam, is a lesbian English professor at Austin State University, who years ago had a fling with Isabel, now chair of the English Department. When Isabel is found in her office with a broken neck, suspicion falls on Miriam, but also on most of the rest of the department. The only thing lacking here - and I miss it - is an old-fashioned list in the front of the book labeled *dramatis personae*. Even in metafiction, you can't tell the players without a scorecard. University of Wisconsin Press, \$24.95 paperback, 9780299219741.



I really liked *Grave Silence*, Rose Beecham's first thriller featuring Jude Devine, FBI agent and sheriff's detective in the American Southwest. In that book Beecham walked my personal line between necessary evil and distasteful violence. However, I found the sequel, **Sleep of Reason**, hard to get through because the subject matter is so very dark: a child murder case inspired by a real-life case in Australia. Beecham (the mystery alter ego of romance writer Jennifer Fulton) writes a well-turned sentence and creates believable characters. *Sleep of Reason* intertwines a number of subplots - one involving a lesbian vigilante called Lonewolf and another about Jude's new romance with a straight Mormon woman (good choice!). If you can get past the subject matter, this is another intriguing thriller from an excellent writer. Bold Strokes, \$15.95, 9781933110530.

Even if you never cross genre boundaries, you might want to take a look at **Mind Games** by Nancy M. Griffis. Although set in the near future (2081 to be exact), this is not so much science fiction as an entertaining police procedural with a nifty twist. Detective Becca Curtains is one of the few telepaths on the force, in a society where telepaths are feared, misunderstood, and even targeted by an organized hate group. Working with a new and annoying cop partner, Becca makes mental contact with a terrible evil intelligence, a killer who is out to destroy all telepaths. I have a few quibbles (which should be filed under "compulsive nitpicking editor"), but I do want to say that I'm tired of the cliché of partners who rub each other the wrong way and thereby produce sexual heat. If the reader knows immediately where this is going, certainly a telepath would. Quest Books, \$16.95, 9781932300536.

New in paper:

The Iron Girl: A Jane Lawless Mystery, Ellen Hart, St. Martin's/Minotaur, \$14.95, 9780312317508.

This Dame for Hire, Sandra Scoppettone, Ballantine, \$6.99, 9780345478115.

Petty Treason, Madeleine E. Robins, St. Martin's Press/TOR, \$6.99, 9780765343062.



Lesbians Out on the Web

In a recent AfterEllen.com column, Linda Villarosa reviewed *Spirited: Affirming the Soul and Black Gay/Lesbian Identity* by Lisa C. Moore and G. Winston James: www.afterellen.com/column/2006/9/outside.html.

Joanne Fleisher, author of *Living Two Lives: Married to a Man and In Love with a Woman* (Alyson, \$15.95, 9781555839185), appeared on *The Oprah Winfrey Show* as an expert on married women who come out as lesbians. Read my review of the show and profile of Joanne on AfterEllen.com: www.afterellen.com/TV/2006/10/oprah.html.



Banned Books

Alison Bechdel's *Fun Home* and Craig Thompson's *Blankets* are being removed from circulation at the Marshall, Missouri public library. A library patron asked for their removal due to their "explicit graphics." Since the Marshall Public Library has never had a book challenged before, they never adopted a formal materials selection policy. A hearing with the board of trustees of the library will appoint a committee to develop a policy. Development of the policy and obtaining approval from the board will take at least two months. In the meantime, *Fun Home* and *Blankets* will not be available to library patrons:

www.publishersweekly.com/article/CA6380956.html?nid=2286.



Awards

Hermione Lee (*Virginia Woolf, Willa Cather: Double Lives, Edith Wharton, and others*), chair of the Man Booker Prize judges, recently announced Kiran Desai is the winner of the £50,000 Man Booker Prize for Fiction for *The Inheritance of Loss*. Desai, 35, is the youngest woman to win the prize. Sarah Waters was the favorite to win for *The Night Watch*, which was recently released in paperback. Transcripts of online book chats with Booker Prize shortlisters Sarah Waters and Kate Grenville: www.themanbookerprize.com/2006prize/chats.

The Publishing Triangle is now accepting nominations for its 2007 fiction, nonfiction, and poetry awards, for books published between January 1 and December 31, 2006. There are six awards: the Randy Shilts Award for Gay Nonfiction; the Judy Grahn Award for Lesbian Nonfiction; the Audre Lorde Award for Lesbian Poetry; the Thom Gunn Award for Gay Poetry; the Edmund White Award for Debut Fiction; and the Bill Whitehead Award for Lifetime Achievement. Members of the public can submit nominations for all but the Whitehead award. The deadline for nominations is December 1. See www.publishingtriangle.org for more information and to download a nomination form.



Calls for Submissions

Sinister Wisdom #72: *Two Spirit Women of First Nations*

Guest Editors Chrystos (Menominee) and Sunny Birdstone (Ktunaxa) seek submissions from indigenous dykes (those from the Americas, as well as the Pacific: Hawaii, New Zealand, Australia), with a land base (i.e. reservation, rancho, etc.) and a tribal affiliation (Maori, Koori, Cree, etc.). Government recognition of tribal status is not necessary (e.g. the Duwamish) for a forthcoming issue of *Sinister Wisdom*. The editors are particularly interested in stories from dykes who were in residential schools, are elders, and have been/are incarcerated. Submissions and inquiries should be sent to sbirdstone@hotmail.com or mail to Chrystos & S. Birdstone, 3250 S. 77th #8, Tacoma, WA 98409. Deadline: March 1, 2007.

Sinister Wisdom #74: Activism Latina Lesbian Style

Guest editor Juanita Ramos (editor of *Compañeras: Latina Lesbians* and *Chicano Lives and Criminal Justice: Voices from El Barrio* and author of *Gender, Ethnicity, and the State: Latina and Latino Prison Politics*) seeks art work, photography, poems, songs, letters, essays, short stories, interviews, and journal entries, in Spanish and/or English, from Chicana/Latina/Latin American lesbians for an issue of *Sinister Wisdom* which will explore "how our sisters define activism." Deadline is October 1, 2007. Submissions and queries can be emailed to companeras1994@yahoo.com or mailed to Juanita Ramos, PO Box 678, W.V.S., Binghamton, NY, 13905-0678. Also see www.juanitadiazcotto.com.

At the Old Place: A Gay & Lesbian Bar Anthology

Journalist Charles Michael Smith has extended the deadline for an upcoming anthology about lesbian and gay bars. He invites submissions of short stories, poetry, essays, novel excerpts, journal entries, correspondence, reportage, photographs, and artwork (including cartoons). For more details, see the listing on www.lambdaliterary.org. Deadline: January 31, 2007.

Anthology on Bisexuality

The folks at Biwriters.org are seeking stories that illuminate something about the experience of being bisexual. All genres such as fantasy, science fiction, romance, historical, mystery, western, vampires, etc. as well as contemporary fiction are encouraged. Sex scenes are fine, but erotica will not be accepted. Maximum length 15,000 words/30 pages. Submit as attachment (preferably in Word) along with bio to: Sheela Lambert at info@biwriters.org. Deadline: January 1, 2007. For more info, visit www.biwriters.org.

An Anthology of Lesbian Sleuths and the Supernatural

Lynne Jamneck (*Down the Rabbit Hole*) is looking for stories by women writers that explore supernatural and other weird happenings, and are centered around a 'whodunit' type conundrum. The sleuth of the story - whether amateur or professional - must be a lesbian character. No excessive violence. Humor is welcome. No fan fiction. Character driven stories with strong emphasis on storytelling essential. Questions can be emailed to superantho@gmail.com. Submissions should be mailed to L. Jamneck, 26 Stellin Street, Lower Hutt, 5011, New Zealand. Word length: 7,000 - 10,000 words. Deadline: November 30, 2006.

That's it for this issue of *The Lesbian Edition*. We'll be back next month with a new, queerer biography of Katharine Hepburn, new books by Lillian Faderman and Patricia Nell Warren, and much more.

If you give gifts during the winter holiday season - or any time for that matter - please consider a gift subscription to one or more of the three editions of Books To Watch Out For. Your friends who love to read will thank you for it!

Until next month,

Suzanne Corson
editor@bookstowatchoutfor.com



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