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The Lesbian Edition

Premiere Issue

Welcome to the Premiere Issue of Books To Watch Out For!*

Books To Watch Out For (BTWOF) is a new e-letter announcing, reviewing, and celebrating lesbian books and publishing – and all the books we read. If you live in a community with a great women's bookstore, you *might* not need **BTWOF**. But for the rest of us, an issue of **BTWOF** is like a monthly visit to the new arrivals shelf at our favorite women's bookstore.

I was lucky enough to work for women's bookstores for 25 years. When I stopped publishing *Feminist Bookstore News* in 2000 and started working in the tech world, the hardest adjustment wasn't the work or the people or even the crazy priorities, it was not being able to find the new lesbian and womanist books I wanted to read. Other women were having the same problem – and many of us were also worried about what would happen to our literature if the books didn't find their audiences. **So I started Books To Watch Out For! – an e-letter to help lesbians find books, to help "our" books find their audiences, and to build a better literary future for us all.**

You can [subscribe online](#) (or by mail) and a new issue will arrive in your inbox every month. You can read it onscreen or print it out, mark it up, and take it to your favorite bookstore to get the books you want to read. Subscriptions are an affordable \$2.50 per month – cheaper than a bag of movie popcorn – and are billed annually. Five dollars from each subscription goes back to community organizations. Subscribe by mail or online at

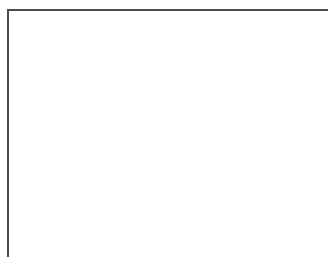
About BTWOF

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

The Lesbian Edition

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

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The Gay Men's Edition

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

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More Books for Women

will launch in 2004.

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

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

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

Advertising & Sponsorships

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

www.BooksToWatchOutFor.com/. (Yes, *of course* there's a print version for women who don't have email.)

Each issue features a range of books from literary fiction to trash, from politics and passion to beach reads, from biography to news from the lesbian book community. Nan Cinnater fills you in on recent mysteries, and we also check with the staff at a feminist bookstore to see what they're reading.

I hope you enjoy this issue and decide to try it out. If you like it, tell your friends! If not, [email us](#) and tell us what you'd rather see.

Yours in spreading the words,

Carol Seajay

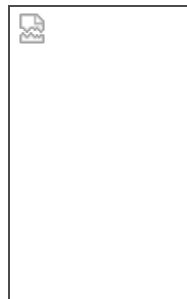
The Lesbian Edition

Premiere Issue

Find of the Issue

Months ago, long before Books To Watch Out For was even a gleam in my mind's eye, I had an email from Akashic Books: they were publishing Nina Revoyr's new novel, **Southland**. Would I consider reviewing it?

Now you have to understand that I'd sworn off of book reviewing. I was deep into my tech career and had no outlet for a review, even if I wanted to write one. But it was one of those moments when the Fates have decided your future but haven't bothered to clue you in. I said I'd risk getting pulled back into reviewing if they'd risk that I wouldn't.



"No" would have been a simpler response. But I had loved Revoyr's first book, **The Necessary Hunger**. It was fierce, passionate, and as gutsy as the girls it portrayed: teens from South Central Los Angeles with a hunger for life, for each other, to be themselves, and most of all, a hunger for that saving grace in their lives, basketball. Set in high schools, perhaps, but definitely not a young adult novel, it was one of my five favorite books the year it was published.



Housekeeping

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- » whatever has changed.



Still, I did everything I could to resist **Southland** when it arrived. I was put off by the cover and by all the reviews that stressed the location more than the story or the characters. I wasn't captivated by the beginning. I put it down. I didn't want to care about this Japanese American law student and her ambivalence about her relationships with both her grandfather and her girlfriend. Was it the book or was it my punky, mid-life career-crisis mood?

But there was this question of why her grandfather's will gave his closed-for-decades grocery to a black teenager who perished in the Watts riots. There were the people Jackie met – and the bonds forged – on the way to unraveling the story. There was her discovery of a vibrant, semi-rural, multi-cultured community that forged cross-race bonds that shaped lives long after economic and political forces gutted it. There was that hunger that Revoyr's storytelling builds in me: a need to understand what happened, how it could have happened, and to understand the migrations that moved like a prevailing wind through these lives and this community. I've long been interested in lesbian migration – so essential a part of the lesbian/gay landscape that we rarely notice it. In **Southland** I found an understanding, if not the specifics, of that part of my own life. I found the last chapters to be as compelling as a good mystery, though wiser, and more satisfying than most.

Still, I was left with an itch: I wanted to know how Revoyr had built this story, how she had pulled my resisting self in so deeply. I wanted to know what she was doing in the background while I was engrossed in the story. I finished **Southland** when I was allegedly on my way to the gym. Then I did three things: I swam my half mile, stopped at the store for cat food, then sat down with a cup of tea and started over again on page one.

"Nina Revoyr gives us her Los Angeles. Her people are as reticent and careful as any under siege, but she sifts their stories out of the dust of neighborhoods, police reports, and family legend. The stories – black, white, Asian, and multiracial – intertwine in unexpected and deeply satisfying ways. Read this book and tell me you don't want more."

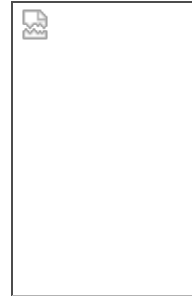
–Dorothy Allison

It's books like **Southland** that inspired *Books To Watch Out For* – books that can change and expand the ways we understand ourselves and the possibilities for our world. We just need to be able to find them. **Southland**, \$15.95, Akashic Books; **The Necessary Hunger**, \$14.95, St. Martin's Press.

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Fiction

So what happened to the black and Japanese communities of Crenshaw and Watts? Nancy Rawles' **Crawfish Dreams**, like an unplanned sequel, addresses some of those questions and others as it explores the complex histories of the Brossards, a Creole family that left the dangers of Louisiana for the relative safety of Watts a generation ago.



Rawles' American Book Award winning novel, **Love Like Gumbo**, as I recall, focused on Grace, the somewhat wayward, activist, lesbian daughter. But **Crawfish Dreams** is her mother's story. It offers a larger history, seen through Camille's urge to protect, nurture, and connect her children (even as time and adulthood pull them in profoundly conflicting directions). Camille does her best to reconcile their choices with her own priorities while also trying to provide for her own encroaching older age. **Crawfish Dreams**, \$21.95, Doubleday; **Love Like Gumbo**, \$14:00, Fjord Press, 1997.

The Secret Life of Bees seems to be everyone's feel-good recommendation for the summer – just the thing for when you need a respite from the daily harassments of life. Set in South Carolina, in the midst of the first voter registration drives, **Bees** centers on a young white girl's search for her (deceased) mother, the gutsy, determined-to-vote "stand-in" mother, and their escape to Tiburon, South Carolina where they are taken in by a trio of black beekeeping sisters. The Calendar sisters share the mesmerizing world of bees and honey, their various paths to dignity in an unwelcoming world, and their celebration of the Black Madonna.

It's a wonderful novel about divine female power and the redemptive power of love in a difficult world. I loved the book, cherished the history it taught and the issues it raised, but sometimes thought the issues of race and the legacies of slavery needed another layer of awareness to be totally satisfying. It made me pause to wonder how it would feel to be black and reading (yet another) tale that includes generations of white people benefiting from the love freely given by generations of black women who labored, for the meanness of wages, for white families. None of these stories

are easy to tell and I appreciated Sue Monk Kidd's brave, and sometimes excellent, efforts to reclaim this richness and complexity. \$14.00, Penguin.



I went from **Bees** to exploring my own culture's experience with slavery in **Testimony of an Irish Slave Girl**, a compelling fictionalization that imagines the life of one of the estimated 50,000 to 80,000 Irish kidnapped – many during childhood – and taken as "indentured servants" to Barbados in the mid-1600s to endure a form of slavery that

few survived. Kate McCafferty's *Cot Daley*, kidnapped as a young girl, can't be subservient enough to avoid "punishments" that include selling off her children and extending her "term" for the rest of her life. Our Cot is no hero – she makes bad decisions, betrays those who would rather be her allies, but eventually finds common cause with the man she's bred to, understanding him to be from a people (Ibo) that believed as fiercely in freedom and justice as her own. McCafferty's novel is both a difficult read and a wise glimpse into Irish history and Barbados' slave uprisings. It left me wanting to know more about both. \$13.00 Penguin.

War Is Not Healthy For Children And Other Living Beings, dept.

Jean Harris' **Five Quarters of the Orange**, an engrossing exploration of the profound and life-long consequences of war for the children who survive it, is a great antidote to the current administration's "We only do short wars" crapola.

The novel starts slowly, gracefully, in the memories of a French woman who has returned to the village of her childhood. But it's Harris' portrayal of adolescence during the German occupation, the difficult morality of living in a war, and the impact on the generations that follow that make the novel so compelling. This girlchild's resilience ("I was always the troublesome one, the discordant one. skinny and dark like my mother, I must have reminded her too much of herself.") and her difficult choices, oddly enough, leave one almost hopeful. Harris also wrote *Chocolat*, but this is a far more complex and interesting tale. \$13.95, Harper/Perennial.

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Lives

Leaving Mother Lake is the fascinating



portrait of young girl growing up in "The Country of Daughters" – a still-functioning matrilineal society on the shores of Lake Lagu high in the Himalayas. Yang Erche Namu, who left Mother Lake to become a musician, and cultural anthropologist Christine Mathieu, one of the first Westerners to study the Moso, give us a world where homes pass from mothers to daughters, where daughters are cherished above all else, and where marriage is thought to destroy the family. In the Country of Daughters adult children stay in their Mother House, community-wide rituals welcome young women to adulthood, and women and men cherish their relationships but neither organize their lives around them nor expect them to last forever. It's an unbelievably rich book – a gift for all of us who ever dreamed of matriarchies – and the telling is a wonderful as the history. Give a copy to beloved friend or –better yet – treat yourself. \$23.95, Little, Brown.



In a totally different universe, lesbian historian Lillian Faderman, in her memoir **Naked in the Promised Land**, writes about growing up as the bastard daughter of her much loved and Holocaust-scarred mother, lesbian life in the 50s, working her way through UC-Berkeley as a burlesque stripper, Women's Lib in the 70s, an incredibly rich academic career, and what it took to become a (lesbian) mother. Oh, yes, and a few relationships, too. What a journey! But don't take my word for it:



"The photos alone are worth the price of admission." –Amy Tan.

"How one woman used her good looks to land the girl of her dreams, and found a career where she could use her brains instead of her breasts. A testament to a personal vision in the face of historical struggle." –Sarah Schulman.

"Who'd have thought a professor's life could be such a gripping page-turner?" –Emma Donoghue.

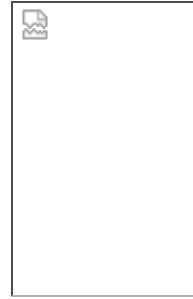
\$26, Houghton Mifflin.

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Science Fiction

Last fall someone with an "outdated" promo list sent *Feminist Bookstore News* a copy of Kelley Eskridge's **Solitaire**. It haunted me not only because it is brilliant science fiction, or because I learned a lot about managing tech projects, but because it was a perfect example of what I wanted to be reading but wasn't finding: excellent writing, profoundly insightful and engrossing story, and a complex exploration of passion and commitment (and the fear thereof) between women.



I like to think that if I'd seen it in a bookstore I would have picked it up – the cover is that clear and strong. I'm sure I would have taken it home just for the pleasure of the blurbs on the back: Dorothy Allison, Ursula Le Guin, Octavia Butler, Suzy McKee Charnas, Karen Joy Fowler, *and* Vonda McIntyre (!) and then found the writing within.

But I didn't find it in any of the places I was looking for books. And it's not a book that I would have wanted to miss. And, as a woman who has cherished women's and lesbian and feminist literature all her life, that troubled me a great deal and fueled the fire that led to launching *Books To Watch Out For!* But hey, we're reading science fiction here, so maybe that promo list was more "predated" rather than outdated?

Ah, but the book! **Solitaire** may be a first novel, but Eskridge had already won a Tiptree and been nominated for a Nebula before she published it. **Solitaire** is set in a "kind and gentle" world imagined, perhaps, by advocates of the World Trade Commission, a world where corporations rule the world in the best interests of their citizen-workers. (Yeah, right!) Ren Segura ("*Real, engaging, and maddening enough to be a friend of mine,*" says Dorothy Allison) is a "Hope," one of the young people trained to lead her corporation and the world into a generous future. But of course it's never that simple when profit, no matter how elegantly disguised, is the ruling paradigm. One small piece of "competitive edge" leads to another deception, and then it's "*passion and deception, devotion and betrayal*" (Karen Joy Fowler) and "*the ageless story of a bright, risky kid trying to find out who she is and where her freedom lies*" (Ursula K. Le Guin). What a ride! Indulge yourself and give it to friends. \$24.95, Eos/HarperCollins. The paperback won't be out until January.

I'd had **Children of God** sitting on my to-be-read shelf for a long time, but friends told me to read her earlier book, **The Sparrow**, first. Good advice, but it was out-of-print. So I

snatched it up when a new edition showed up on the new arrivals table at my neighborhood bookstore (Cover to Cover/San Francisco). Whether you call it science fiction or literary fiction, it was worth the wait. Mary Doria Russell, via the character of one Emilio Sandoz, projects the complex history and impact of the Jesuits into a first contact with a civilization of singers and the cultural earthquake it triggers. She gives us all the complexity of good intentions gone awry, the torments of broken faith and misplaced hope, and lends an understanding to the effects of colonization and missionary religions on our own world – all in a compelling mix of vision, adventure, power struggle, and the pursuit of knowledge that never interferes with the telling of the tale. There's no visible lesbian content, but it's such a novel of social justice that any activist or idealist will read herself right into these worlds. \$13.95 each, Ballantine.

And, just to do a little catch-up in the world of lesbian science fiction, Katherine V. Forrest returned to the back-on-earth struggles of The Unity in **Daughters of an Amber Noon**, the long-awaited sequel to *Daughters of a Coral Dawn*, last fall. Everything you expect from Katherine Forrest: suspense, adventure, romance – and her continuing exploration of morality, the pursuit of justice, and making a place for lesbiankind. Both are now available from Alyson Publications. \$13.95, each.

And, Sally Gearhart's feminist classic, **Wanderground**, is back in print – along with two new tales, **The Kanshou** and **The Magister**. I'm looking forward to reading them. Meanwhile, here's what Suzy McKee Charnas has to say: "Richly conceived and written, this series calls to life a future unlike any I've read about before. This is strong, energetic, deep stuff, a deployment in fiction of hard-earned wisdom (in) a passionate engagement with large and difficult issues." **Wanderground** \$12.95, the two new books are \$14.00 each. All from Spinsters Ink.

Carol Seajay
for *Books To Watch Out For*

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What They're Reading at Women & Children First

Each issue BTWOF asks the staff at a different women's

bookstore what they're reading and what they're loving. This issue we asked the gals at Women & Children First in Chicago. Here's what they said:

* Books with lesbian content.



Lucky in the Corner by Carol Anshaw – A story of family relationships that's been popular with staff for capturing how complex many of our families are. Warm and very funny. And we're always excited to promote a Chicago author! \$13.00, Houghton Mifflin/Mariner Books.*

Highsmith by Marijane Meaker – A biography of the two-year romance between acclaimed young adult author Meaker and mystery novelist Patricia Highsmith. With **Nothing That Meets the Eye: The Uncollected Stories of Patricia Highsmith** having also just been released, there is plenty of new Highsmith material to explore. We also recommend the biography for those not yet familiar with Meaker or with Highsmith's contributions to early lesbian literature and as a look at 1950's gay life in New York.

Highsmith, Cleis Press, \$14.95; **Nothing That Meets the Eye**, \$27.95, Norton (paper coming in November, \$15.95).*

Oryx and Crake by Margaret Atwood – A favorite of many on staff that was nominated for Booksense by staff member Tish Hayes. Tish's recommendation, quoted from the *Booksense 76* newsletter: "This is a superbly crafted, compelling novel set in a dystopian future, where people live in gated communities, watch Noodle News, and are terrified of disease. The similarities to our own world are striking and disturbing, but Atwood is too good a writer to let this become a simple morality tale. The questions she raises about science and society are complex and uncomfortable, and every day more pressing." \$26.00, Doubleday/Nan A. Talese.

Persepolis by Marjane Satrapi – A gripping memoir of a childhood in Iran. This graphic novel explodes stereotypes of Iranian women, men, and children; and introduces you to a family you'll fall in love with. Highly recommended for both graphic novel fans and readers new to the genre. \$17.95,

Random House/Pantheon.

Unless – Carol Shields' last novel is a deep, stunning, very readable story about a woman struggling to understand the choice her daughter has made to essentially remove herself from society. This woman's wondering about her daughter leads her to important questions about the damage done by women's lack of representation in the arts. A dazzling work of feminist fiction. \$13.95, HarperCollins/Fourth Estate.

The Woman Who Gave Birth to Rabbits by Emma Donoghue – These lively, beautiful short stories were each inspired by a real historical tidbit – some small mention of a woman that inspired Donoghue to flesh out an entire story. Gives the gift of a voice to many women who would otherwise be erased from history. \$14.00, Harcourt.*

The Gangster We Are All Looking For by le thi diem thuy – A sparely written novel about the life of a Vietnamese family in America. An unsentimental book written in short passages and stark images, this book is a favorite particularly of those on staff who were here for the author's moving and elegant reading. \$18, Random House/Knopf.

Three Junes by Julia Glass – A debut novel set in Greece, Scotland, and New York, that is another one we love for recognizing the complexities of our family relationships. Features a widowed father, a gay bookseller, and a pregnant single painter whose lives are intricately and brilliantly linked together. These are characters you'll be sad to part with once you've finished. \$14.00, Doubleday/Anchor.

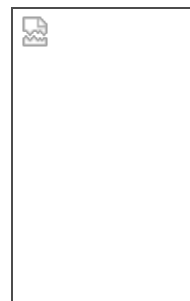
What I Loved by Siri Hustvedt – Store co-owner Linda Bubon says "Ambitious, heartachingly tender, unforgettable.... This is one of the saddest, most brilliant, and beautiful books I've read in years. Hustvedt never turns away from the most difficult issues – creativity and madness, love, passion, loss, grief. This book took over my emotions, all the while engaging my mind." \$25.00, Holt.

Stranger Things Happen by Kelly Link – Beautiful, creepy stories that combine fairytale elements with the everyday, making what's strange familiar and vice-versa. Dreamy and addictive. \$16.00, Small Beer Press.

Buffy the Vampire Slayer and Feminist Philosophy edited by James B. South – The devoted Buffy fanatics on staff are enjoying reading and recommending all the criticism being published on the show. This book of philosophical essays is not light, but it is fun. (\$17.95 paper, Open Court.) We also recommend **Reading the Vampire Slayer** (\$14.95, I.B.

Tauris) as a wider ranging book of Buffy criticism, great to begin with; as well as **Fighting the Forces**. \$26.95 paper, Rowman & Littlefield.

No Turning Back by Estelle B. Freedman – This book was a recent pick of our Young Feminists' Discussion Group. Staff member Michelle says "This accessible international history of feminism covers an impressive array of topics in an engaging way. A great introduction to the movement!" \$15.95, Random House/Ballantine.*



Drinking Coffee Elsewhere by ZZ Packer – A debut short-story collection that crackles with wit and humor. Staffers who've read this book love it, and agree that it lives up to its buzz. Cultural and generational misunderstandings, feeling like an outsider within a community, and creation and recreation of identities are some of her themes. These stories are so absorbing and so wonderfully original that you'll find yourself wanting to read them slowly, to better savor them. \$24.95, Penguin/Riverhead.*

And the number one no-one-has-read-it-but-we-are-all-abuzz-and-cannot-wait-to-get-to-it book: **Becoming Cleopatra: The Shifting Image of an Icon** by local DePaul professor Francesca Royster. An examination of Cleopatra as a racially ambiguous icon of "exotic" femininity, this book examines texts from Shakespeare's plays to the movie "Set It Off." We can't wait to read it! \$19.95 paper, Macmillan/Palgrave.

Many thanks to Pam and all women at Women & Children First for their help and for all the work they do to support our community. You can find Women & Children First online at <http://www.womenandchildrenfirst.com/>, and a current list of women's bookstores at www.litwomen.org/WIP/stores.html.

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The Crime Scene

By Nan Cinnater

Nan's mysteries column was originally published in Feminist Bookstore News. Sojourner picked it up after FBN closed. I miss Sojourner fiercely but am glad to be bringing The Crime Scene back to her readers. I'm not a big mystery reader – but I love reading Nan's writing about them. Nan, until recently, co-owned Now Voyager bookstore in Provincetown, which

specializes in both mysteries and lesbian and gay literature.

–Carol

I once heard that Gertrude Stein had an irrational fear that she would read all the books in the world and be left with nothing to read. I think mystery readers can relate. Not that we really think we can read all the mysteries ever written, but we're afraid of running out of good ones! We rapidly go through all the books of an author we love, then wait impatiently for that author to produce a new book. We haunt libraries and bookstores, hoping to find a familiar name or a great new discovery. That's why I'm so happy to be inaugurating a mystery column for *Books to Watch Out For*. Here are some tips on great new discoveries in the mystery field that lesbian and feminist readers will find intriguing.

A few years ago, author Baxter Clare introduced a tough new lesbian homicide detective hunting a serial killer in **Bleeding Out** (\$13.95, Firebrand Books), an unusually gritty, realistic, and well-written entry in the lesbian cop genre. LAPD Lieutenant "Frank" Franco is back in **Street Rules** (\$12.95, Bella Books), and here she's concerned with the drive-by shooting of Placa Estrella, a teenage gang member. Convincingly detailed and street-smart, **Street Rules** also gives us a fascinating, enigmatic lesbian hero.

Out lesbian Val McDermid is a Scottish writer who has won the highest crime writing awards in Great Britain for her gloomy, twisted Scotland Yard mysteries. She has also written a wonderful, albeit highly political, series about a socialist, lesbian-feminist investigative reporter named Lindsay Gordon, published in the U.S. by Spinsters Ink. In addition, back in the 90s, McDermid wrote a very snappy series about Manchester-based private eye Kate Brannigan, Britain's answer to Kinsey Millhone. Unlike Kinsey, Kate relies heavily on her friends, especially her best buds, a lesbian couple, and her spacey boyfriend, a rock critic. Lucky for us, the brilliant women at Spinsters Ink are bringing the Kate Brannigan series out in paperback in the U.S., starting last year with **Dead Beat** (\$12.95) and **Kick Back** (\$12.95). Now there's **Crack Down** (\$12.95), in which Kate and her boyfriend investigate car dealership fraud, and Richard ends up in jail; and **Clean Break** (\$12.95), in which Kate chases international art thieves across Europe, while also dealing with a case of industrial poisoning. All in a day's work for the modern woman detective.

Who would have thought that the new action heroes for the twenty-first century would be women priests? It seems unlikely, yet there are two excellent new series featuring

women Episcopal priests (both heterosexual) as detectives. **In the Bleak Midwinter** by Julia Spencer-Fleming (\$6.99, St. Martin's) introduces Clare Ferguson, a military brat who served as an army pilot before finding her vocation as a parish priest in a tiny town in upstate New York. In **A Fountain Filled with Blood** (\$23.94, St. Martin's Minotaur), an assault on a local doctor appears to be gay bashing, and Clare is ready to lead the anti-hate brigade. But motives become complicated when the developer of a controversial new resort, who also happens to be gay, is murdered.

The independent Episcopalian priest Lily Connor previously appeared in Michele Blake's excellent first mystery, **The Tentmaker** (\$5.99, Berkley/Prime Crime), and its sequel, **Earth Has No Sorrow** (\$6.99, Berkley/Prime Crime). In **The Book of Light** by Michele Blake (\$24.95, Putnam), Lily is serving as chaplain at Tate University near Boston. There an old friend asks her to help authenticate an ancient scroll that appears to be the gospel according to Jesus himself. The quest takes her from Harvard Square to a monastic community on the Greek isle of Athos. Michele Blake is herself a scholar (a professor at Tufts University, in fact) and a wonderful writer who combines erudition with a gift for ambiance and well-realized characters. You don't have to be religious to appreciate Lily's ethical dilemmas or Blakes' finely crafted suspense. These are truly thinking women's thrillers.

Faye Longchamp, the racially mixed heroine of **Artifacts** by Mary Anna Evans (\$24.95, Poisoned Pen Press), inherited a pre-bellum plantation house from her great-great-grandmother, an ex-slave. On a nearly deserted island off the Florida panhandle, Faye, a trained archaeologist, works on a legitimate dig, but supports her ancestral home by illegal "pot hunting" – digging for valuable artifacts on federal land and selling them on the black market. When Faye digs up a modern human skull, she can't go to the police, but she can't let go of the mystery either.

Mother-daughter writing team P.J. Tracy has delivered one of the best thrillers of the year with **Monkeewrench** (\$23.95, Putnam). The complex plot follows the cops investigating two cases: a hateful religious couple murdered in a tiny town in Wisconsin, and a series of murders in Minneapolis. Then there's the group of misfits at Monkeewrench, a computer gaming company, who carry guns at all times and hide behind high-tech security at home. (I won't say more, although the jacket copy does, and gives away too much of the plot.) The large cast of well-realized characters includes not just one, but two beautiful, sexy, fat women; a lesbian cop; and the memorable central character, Grace McBride, who wears a

full-length black duster and riding boots, as well as a Sig Sauer in a shoulder holster. Once you start reading, don't plan on going to bed early. Good night, Gertrude.

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News

Many of us were worried about where Alison Bechdel would publish when Firebrand closed. The good news is that she's signed a contract for two new books. The first, **Dykes and Sundry Other Carbon-Based Life-Forms To Watch Out For** will be out in October from Alyson Books. Stay tuned! Meanwhile, the recently re-emerged Firebrand Books has reprinted all nine of the previous Dykes To Watch Out For books with new covers.

Elana Dykewoman's wonderful **Beyond the Pale** will be republished this fall by Vancouver-based Raincoast Books. Watch for details in the next *Books To Watch Out For!*

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Coming in the Next Issue...

Spinsters Ink moved to another new owner a couple of years ago. Next month *Books To Watch Out For* will check in with Sharon Silvas to see how Spinsters is faring and what it's publishing these days. We'll also talk to Karen Oosterhous, the new owner of Firebrand Books, about her plans for Firebrand. And, of course, **Books To Watch Out For** will bring you word of new and exciting books, Nan's mysteries column, and a roundup of favorites from another feminist bookstore.

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And in conclusion,

I'm very excited about launching **Books To Watch Out For**. I hope you enjoyed this sample copy and that you've decided to become a regular reader. You can subscribe at www.BooksToWatchOutFor.com or by mail. –And please tell

your friends about it. We've been through some difficult times in the women in print movement, but I'm convinced that, **with Books To Watch Out For**, we can build a communication network that will help our literature – and our community – thrive and grow.

Yours in spreading the words,

Carol Seajay
for *Books To Watch Out For*



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