



The Lesbian Edition

Print It Out

- [PDF of this issue](#)

Volume 3 Number 1

In This Issue...

News

- [Lesbian Lit Wins in U.K.](#)
- [Spinifex Turns 15](#)
- [Saints & Sinners Stays in New Orleans](#)
- [Golden Crown to Atlanta](#)
- [C&G Seeks Lesbian Writing](#)
- [Passings](#)
- [Anyda Marchant, 1911-2006](#)

Books

- [Best Books - 2005](#)
- [Finds](#)
- [Poetry](#)
- [Lives](#)
- [On The Ice](#)
- [Humor](#)
- [Friday Night Reads](#)
- [The Crime Scene](#)
- [Locas](#)
- [She's Got Next](#)
- [Impossible Desires](#)

Essay

Welcome to Volume 3 Number 1

This issue features News at the top, followed by more "Best Books of 2005" from a variety of editors and writers, a wealth of short book reviews and "The Crime Scene", then several longer reviews that had originally been scheduled for issues of the Lambda Book Report that were never published. I realized, just as I sent the last issue off, that I hadn't included any Friday Night Reads, so this issue features a good selection of them as my apology to the romance and adventure readers.

We were very saddened to learn of the deaths of Anyda Marchant and Betty Berzon in mid-January. Anyda was very supportive of both *Feminist Bookstore News* and *Books To Watch Out For*. At one point, in the early '80s, she generously donated the funds to pay for printing and postage for two issues of *FBN* at a time when that made all the difference between the end and the continuation of the publication. Betty Berzon was also a fierce supporter of lesbian and gay lit, an active supporter of The Lambda Literary Foundation, and a co-funder of the Foundation's Lesbian Debut Fiction Award. Their contributions enriched our literary worlds and we shall miss them both greatly.

Yours in spreading the words,
Carol

.....

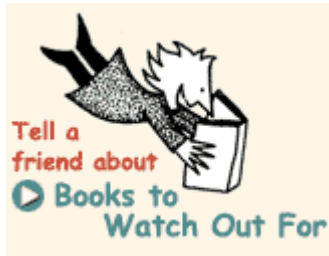
News

Lesbian Writers Score Big in British Literary Prizes

In the U.S., mainstream presses published virtually no new lesbian work in 2005, but in the U.K. lesbian writers are accorded a bit more respect:

Ali Smith won the **Whitbread Novel of the Year** award for her third novel, *The Accidental*. The Whitbread carries a 5,000 pound prize. *The Accidental* was also shortlisted

- [The Power of Mystery Fiction](#)



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.

- » [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**

for the Booker Prize. Her earlier novel, *Hotel World*, was shortlisted for both the Booker and Orange literary prizes in 2001.

Scottish poet and playwright **Carol Ann Duffy** won the **T. S. Eliot Prize** for *Rapture*. The prize carries an award of 10,000 pounds (approximately \$17,500). *Rapture*, according to *The Independent*, is a "passionate and beautiful new book-length love affair in verse" by "one of the most important, and rightly loved, poets of our time." In 1995, Duffy was made an Officer of the British Empire (OBE).

Earlier this year **Jeanette Winterson** (*Oranges Are Not The Only Fruit*, et al) was made an OBE.

Spinifex Press Turns 15

If you're in Australia, head for Melbourne March 3-5 for Spinifex's weekend-long literary festival and celebration.

Spinifex publishes a wide range of feminist and lesbian titles, most of which feature shockingly pink spines. Their list includes writers from every continent, and features strong lists of Asian and Pacific writers, Australian and New Zealand indigenous writers, and African writers as well as internationally known European and North American feminist and lesbian writers.

More info at www.spinifexpress.com.au

Saints & Sinners Stays in New Orleans - May 12-14

Hurricanes be damned. The Fourth Annual Saints & Sinners LGBTQ Literary Festival will take place as scheduled, May 12-14, in the proud city of New Orleans. I've only been twice – and it was my favorite GLBTQ writers' conference ever, even before they declared me a Literary Saint last year.

Festival organizer Paul Willis writes, "Keep an eye on our website, www.sasfest.com, for updates on the program and events. Your presence and registration to the event will mean even more this year. Not only will you be supporting the literary community, but also helping to recover losses in funding by the New Orleans AIDS Task Force, as well as supporting the economy of the city.* Saints and Sinners events take place in the French Quarter, and I can assure you that the celebrated neighborhood is as beautiful and charming as ever. Our host hotel, the Olivier House, and other hotels, B&B's, restaurants, and clubs are open for your enjoyment. Please join us for a Saints and Sinners to remember — a reunion, a celebration, and a pledge to the cultural future of New Orleans."

2006 speakers and presenters will include Val McDermid, Achy Obejas, Steven Saylor, Karl Soehnlein, Michelle Tea, and Emanuel Xavier, among many others.* The S&S Festival is a very successful fundraiser for NO/AIDS TF.

Look for updates in the next few days at:

<http://sasfest.org>

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

Golden Crown Moves to Atlanta, June 8-11

The Golden Crown Literary Society will meet in Atlanta this year, at the Sheraton Midtown, instead of in New Orleans. The conference features two tracks, one for lesbian writers, the other for fans. This year's conference kicks off on Thursday with in-depth workshops for writers and editors. The event will, again, be crowned by the GCLS Literary Awards Banquet and Dance.

Details at:

<http://www.gclscon.com/>

Carroll & Graf Seeks Lesbian Writing

Carroll & Graf senior editor Don Weise is actively looking for lesbian non-fiction as well as literary and commercial fiction other than mystery or romance.

"There ought to be a way of fostering more lesbian lit from the publisher's side," he told *The Lesbian Edition*, "but I'm not sure how much lesbian writing really matters to most (mainstream) publishers. For those of us invested in it, however, we're doing some exciting projects. In addition to Leslie Feinberg's first novel since *Stone Butch Blues* (*Drag King Dreams*; April 06) and Michelle Tea's anthology of new queer girl writing (*Baby Remember My Name*; October 06), I have lesbian and lesbian-interest books out or about to come out from Kate Clinton (*What the L?*), Cheryl Clarke (*Days of Good Looks*), Sarah Schulman (*The Child*), Patrick Califia (*Blood and Silver*), and Ali Liebegott (*The IHOP Papers*). I'm also publishing Marcia Gallo's extraordinary, *Different Daughters* (October 06), the first ever history of the Daughters of Bilitis, and, later, I'm bringing out the first biography of Jeanette Howard Foster, the pioneering lesbian scholar and Kinsey librarian. I'd love to see more lesbian biographies and histories, though not nearly enough come my way."

"Unlike the tired old voices that tell us GLBT publishing is over," he continued, "I'm incredibly hopeful about our future. My list of GLBT titles at C&G has doubled to 25 annually over the past two years. In fact, I'd go so far as to say that we've entered one of the richest periods of GLBT lit we've seen in a long time. Exactly how rich the period becomes depends on all of us."

Anyda Marchant, 1911-2006

Anyda Marchant, lawyer, partner, visionary, publisher, and writer died at home on January 11. She was 94 and had published 14 novels under the nom de plume, Sarah Aldridge, co-founded two lesbian publishing houses, Naiad Press and A & M, and practiced law. [See below](#) for the full obituary.

Betty Berzon

Writer, psychotherapist, and community activist Betty Berzon died January 24, 2006, peacefully in her sleep.

In 1971 Betty became the first psychotherapist in the

sponsorship information.



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.



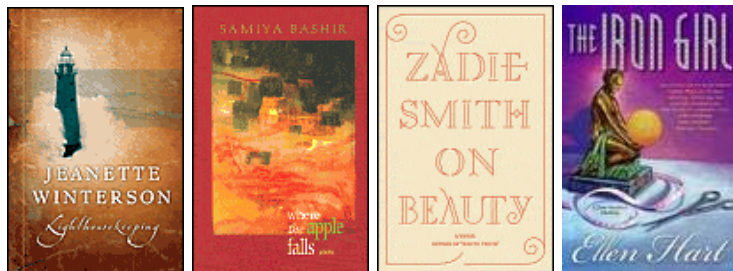
country to publicly declare herself as a gay mental health professional. Today, Division 44 of the American Psychological Association has more than 1500 members. An expert in small group process, Betty worked with Evelyn Hooker, Carl Rogers, Abe Maslow, Virginia Satir and others as part of the emerging Human Potential Movement. She practiced psychotherapy with groups and couples for the last twenty-five years of her life, during which time she also wrote four more books, including the perennial best-selling *Permanent Partners: Building Gay and Lesbian Relationships that Last* and *Surviving Madness: A Therapist's Own Story*. She is survived by her life partner of thirty-three years, Teresa DeCrescenzo.



[back to top](#)

Favorites and Bests for '05

What Lesbian Writers and Editors are Reading - Part II



Suzanne Corson

I haven't read many lesbian books this year, other than Friday night reads and erotica! This was fun - thanks for asking me to contribute!

Best novel: You Can Say You Knew Me When by K.M. Soehnlein - not lesbian, but wonderful! New from the author of the also-wonderful **The World of Normal Boys**, no sophomore slump here.

Best poetry collection: Where the Apple Falls by Samiya Bashir - beautiful, moving and, if you ever have the chance to hear her read, don't miss it!

Best Friday Night Read: Just Like That by Karin Kallmaker - business and pleasure sometimes do mix.

Best mystery: Women of Mystery: An Anthology edited by Katherine V. Forrest - new stories by J.M. Redmann and Randy Lordon!

Best erotica collection multiple authors: Stolen Moments: Erotic Interludes 2 edited by Stacia Seaman and Radclyffe - women grabbing sex on the go. -Hot, quick encounters between both long-term couples and strangers in a fun variety of settings.

Best erotica collection, single author: Boy in the

Middle, Patrick Califia - Patrick is one of the best, whether he's writing about trannies, boy on boy, girl on girl, or groups.

Best book about sex: Wild Side Sex: The Book of Kink by Midori - entertaining, informative, and thought provoking essays about fetishes, protocol, and different flavors of kink.

Best "how to" book about sex: Dr. Sprinkle's Spectacular Sex by Annie Sprinkle, Ph.D. - this is a sex makeover/workshop in a book; if you want to spice up your sex life, this is the title to get.

Best guilty pleasure: Invasion of the Dykes to Watch Out For by Alison Bechdel - of course!



Reprint that makes the former bookseller in me very happy:

Patience and Sarah by Isabel Miller. Thanks, Arsenal Pulp! This is the one my customers always loved and wanted to buy for friends, since they wouldn't part with their own copies.

(Suzanne Corson was the Managing Editor of On Our Backs when she wrote this but is now the Executive Editor of H.A.F. Publishing, which publishes On and Girlfriends. In her recent past lives she owned and operated Boadecia's Books, a feminist/LGBTQ bookstore in the Berkeley area, was an editor for EastBayVoice.org, and worked for BTWOF.)

L. Timmel Duchamp

My favorite book this year was Joanna Russ's **We Who Are About To...**, which Wesleyan University Press reissued this spring with an introduction by Samuel R. Delany. I was surprised to find that I appreciated this novel even more now than when I first read it in the late 1970s - particularly its formal audacity, its emotional sophistication, and all that it shows us about the politics of discourse. Like all of Russ's work, *We Who Are About To...* is witty, astute, and fiercely oppositional.

(Timmi's recent books include Love's Body, Dancing in Time, The Grand Conversation, The Red Rose Rages (Bleeding), and Alanya to Alanya; find her short stories and essays at <http://ltimmel.home.mindspring.com>. She is also the founder of Aqueduct Press, which 'brings challenging feminist science fiction to the demanding reader.')

Elana Dykewomon

I'm up in drenched Oregon at the Soapstone writers' retreat, but I want to put in a plug for Alicia Gaspar de Alba's novel, **Desert Blood -The Juarez Murders**. - It's a gritty fictionalization of the murders and disappearances of young women in Juarez with a lesbian academic pushed into being a reluctant detective. Well written, important



blend of politics and detective story - and I'm not usually a detective novel reader.

If I were home, looking at my bookshelf, I'd probably come up with more, but I'm thinking that we need some good dyke fiction to come out - soon!

(Elana is both an extraordinary writer – think Beyond the Pale, They Will Know Me By My Teeth, and Riverfinger Women – and a teacher. Find info on her classes at <http://www.dykewomon.org>.)

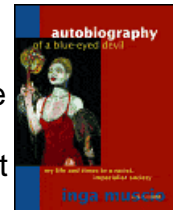
Mary Ellen Kavanaugh

I really have been thinking about this all this time....

Lighthousekeeping, Jeannette Winterson. Lyrical, mythical, haunting, keeps reverberating in my soul....

On Beauty, Zadie Smith. Delicious; classic yet with such a keen observation of modern life.

And, here's a third fav: Inga Muscio's **Autobiography of a Blue-Eyed Devil** - quintessential Muscio. What I loved about the book is that it put a whole lot of stuff together - all the isms under one cover - and she ties it all to the day-to-dayness of her life.



(Mary Ellen Kavanaugh, founder and owner of the now defunct My Sisters' Words Bookstore (1987-2003) now positions herself as champion of indie bookstores and works at indie press distributor Consortium in the Twin Cities - 2 of the 10 most literate cities in the country.)

Lori Lake

Hands down, my favorite novel of 2005 was **The Iron Girl** by Ellen Hart. Emotional, at times funny, and dramatic in all the right ways, this book was more than a mystery. It was also an exploration into Jane Lawless' past relationship and her current place in an increasingly rich life. It's the best mystery with a lesbian protagonist that I have ever read, and I was entertained and profoundly moved by it.

In the non-fiction category, I chortled my way through Lynne Truss's **Eats, Shoots & Leaves: The Zero Tolerance Approach to Punctuation**, which not only "gives you permission to love punctuation," but also made me laugh a lot.

And I quite simply loved Ursula Le Guin's 2004 offering, **The Wave in the Mind: Talks and Essays on the**



Writer, the Reader, and the Imagination. I like the fact that LeGuin does not hesitate to address sexism, homophobia, and unfairness. Her piece entitled "Unquestioned Assumptions" is masterful. She talks about the four common varieties of unquestioned assumption (We're all men, white, straight, and Christian), and then adds a fifth (We're all young) which she explores at length. Her analysis of these issues alone was worth the price of the book. If you haven't read it, run right out and get one. I read a chapter

every night before I went to bed, and I was so sad to see it come to an end.

(Lori is the author of the 2005 thriller Have Gun We'll Travel and has two books coming out in 2006: Snow Moon Rising, a lesbian WWII saga, and an anthology, Romance For Life, co-edited with Tara Young.)

Regina Marler

Here's my favorite for 2005 although there were so many! Most non-gay: Michel Faber, Murakami, Ishiguro.

Mary Gaitskill's **Veronica** - a beautifully written novel about untidy, uncomfortable, half-unwanted love, and the narrator's discovery of her own small but authentic heart. As I wrote in my review, "reading Mary Gaitskill is like having a flock of birds fly straight at your face. You register the beauty, but you still want to turn away."



My two "big hit" predictions for 2006 are Kenji Yoshino's **Covering** and Norah Vincent's **Self-Made Man**. They're both fantastic.

(Regina's most recent book is Queer Beats: How the Beats Turned America On to Sex. She reviews for the Advocate, the L. A. Times Book Review, and the New York Times Book Review.)

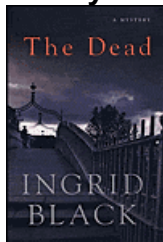
Katia Noyes

Ali Liebegott's **The Beautifully Worthless**. I first read it last April after hearing her read and fell in love with it. I asked her to read with me at my launch because her work was so incredible and since then we have gotten to know each other. But when I read her book, I did not know her, so I was not biased!



(Katia's girl-on-the-road tale, Crashing America, is clearly the book-of-the-month with the gals at my local gym.)

Radclyffe



I would have to call a favorite book one I would read twice, often back to back. I am excluding all the Bold Strokes books, quite a few of which fit this category for me.

This year – I'd pick **The Dead**, by Ingrid Black (released late 2004). This mystery/intrigue set in Dublin has everything I like – a menacing serial killer, an edgy dark heroine, and an even edgier romance between the disenfranchised female American FBI agent and her Detective Chief Superintendent lover.

(Prolific writer and publisher Radclyffe's latest book is Honor Reclaimed; she has two books coming in the spring, Turn Back Time and Promising Hearts.)

Jean Redmann

Best read? Uh . . .the large-print map of Texas,

Louisiana, Mississippi and Arkansas. It's weird, but I can't think of a single book I read before Aug. 29th and I just haven't done much reading since, which is also bizarre for me. However, I have managed to finish Micky Knight #5.

(Jean is back at work and writing in post-Katrina New Orleans. Micky Night, one of my all-time favorite dyke sleuths, lives in Death by the Riverside, Deaths of Jocasta, Lost Daughters and at The Intersection of Law and Desire.)

Jill Roberts

Air by Geoff Ryman: After her community is nearly destroyed in a test of the government-sponsored Air internet network, it is left to Chung Mae, fashion expert, to prepare for the inevitable future invasions. During her forays in and out of Air, she turns tragedy into opportunity, while opposed and aided by her traditionalistic neighbors, shadowy government figures, and a surprisingly loyal network of international allies. The memorable cast of characters is ethnically and geographically diverse, strange, funny, passionate, and amazingly real.



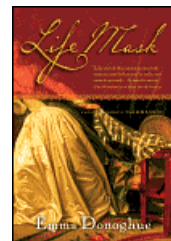
Geoff Ryman (*Was, Lust*) somehow writes convincingly - and with his signature eloquence - from the perspective of a middle-aged, illiterate, ethnic Chinese woman in Karzistan, a fictional near-future country in the far-East. Complex and stubborn, yet possessing a great deal of compassion and integrity, Chung Mae is one of the finest heroines in recent memory.

Ryman is a key author in the emerging "slipstream" movement, which artfully melds literary and science-fiction/fantasy tropes. And as slipstream is about unexpected juxtapositions, so *Air* plays with seemingly contradictory ideas: an uneducated woman in an underdeveloped society engages in international communication, plays with sexual mores, and pioneers economic innovation. Not to be missed.

(Jill is Managing Editor at Tachyon Publications. BTWOF's crystal ball sees her editing a feminist science fiction list in a near future.)

Stacia Seaman

My favorite book of the year was Emma Donoghue's **Life Mask**. She's one of my favorite writers, and I really enjoyed this book. She does historical fiction very well, and I thought that although the story was complex, it was clear and compelling, and she rose to the challenge admirably.



(Stacia edits for Bold Strokes Books, Intaglio, and other presses and is also the co-editor of Infinite Pleasures, Stolen Moments: Erotic Interludes 2, and the forthcoming Lessons in Love.)

Michelle Tea

I'm honored that you asked my opinions on best books of the year...; I can never pick just one...

Best Lesbian Books:

The Beautifully Worthless by Ali Liebegott - An epic poem about a runaway waitress who, with Dalmatian in tow, hops into her pickup truck and takes off in search of a mythical American town where there is no sadness. By turns heartwrenching and hilarious, always poetic and surprising.

Crashing America by Katia Noyes - Continuing the dykes on the road theme, this novel tells the story of a totally charming, rootless and lost punk teenage queer girl named Girl who takes off on a misadventure searching for family, belonging and love.



Best Books By Excellent Ladies Who Aren't Lesbians:

Little Beauties by Kim Addonizio - Starring three females: a woman struggling against her OCD who is recently off her meds; a pregnant seventeen-year-old girl and her unborn (and later, born) daughter, Stella. Smart and smart-assed, the characters are amazing, real, likeable. The book throws you a curveball that sort of socks you in the guts.

Veronica by Mary Gaitskill - This book is stunning. An aging, sort of banged-up former model looks back on her life. The prose sweeps you inside it like a drug trip. It is wholly engrossing and a serious literary accomplishment.

Best book to look for in 2006 is Pink coming out from Hayworth. Amazing!

(Poet, novelist, journalist, Radar Reading series curator, and ex-bookseller Michelle Tea's new novel, Rose of No Man's Land, is due out momentarily; look for her anthology of new queer girl writing, Baby Remember My Name, in the Fall.)

.....

Find(s) of the Issue

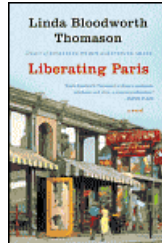
This month's find was buried beneath the stacks of books next to my reading chair: Elizabeth Brownrigg's **The Woman Who Loved War**. Published by Firebrand last spring, it offers an interesting, difficult exploration of internal (and external) conflict and resolution. Journalist and war reporter Suzanne made one false step and is now earth-bound, learning her way into life from a wheelchair perspective.



Transitioning gracefully is not one of her priorities, but she begins to rediscover herself, despite her best (worst?) efforts, on midnight wheelchair rides. In a parallel life, Gulf War veteran Rick also made one small, fatal (but not for him) mistake. Both need to find a way to

make amends to their pasts. Of course there are more than a few adventures that got Suzanne into this situation, and more than a few before either of them gets out. It's an ambitious novel, I wish it worked just a bit better - I wanted it to *snap!* and it doesn't, quite. Plan on a slow, atmosphere setting start. Brownrigg's first novel *Falling to Earth* was a Lambda Literary Award Finalist. 192 finely printed pages. \$14.95, Firebrand.

More Than Bit Parts



You'd be hard pressed to call Linda Bloodworth Thomason's **Liberating Paris** a lesbian novel – it's the adult tale of six long-time friends in small Arkansas town the year that, well, Wal-Mart comes to town, the year Wood's marriage falls apart, the year Carl dies, the year that Duff returns to the town that scorned her, the year Mavis finally figures out what she wants – but there are rewards for the patient lesbian reader. It's a classic tale of loss and love and community and change and of everything that's gained along the way. A rich and wonderful read - perfect for a cold winter night or a pervasive bad mood.

Thomason was the first woman to write for *M*A*S*H*, she wrote a hundred episodes of *Designing Women* (the proceeds of which she has spent sending 100 women through colleges and trade schools), and served as an unofficial media advisor to Bill Clinton. "In 1992," she noted, "I had three television shows, three hundred employees, and the most lucrative production contract in the history of CBS. By the end of the Clinton presidency, I had not one television show, a single secretary, and Ken Starr had in his possession every piece of paper I've ever owned. And I wouldn't trade it for anything." And that's exactly the spirit you'll find in **Liberating Paris**. Thanks to Sara Look at Charis for recommending it to us. \$13.95, Harper.



[back to top](#)

Poetry



Directed by Desire: The Collected Poems of June Jordan is "*The June Jordan book to have.*" (Pam Harcourt in [More Books for Women #3](#)). It includes new work addressing the poet and activist's struggle with breast cancer, and all the work where her best black, activist, bisexual, visionary, and trouble-making selves shine through. Edited by Jan Heller, with an introduction by Adrienne Rich. 650 pages, Copper Canyon Press, \$40 cloth.

Her younger sister-poet, Samiya Bashir addresses the black queer diaspora from post-War (WW II) to Hip-Hop in **Where the Apple Falls**. “She knows the women-texts that give us all the fortitude to write,” says Cheryl Clarke, “[and] makes me hear ghosts – of slavery, Reconstruction, migration, urbanization....[S]tunning, smart and real.” \$14.00, Redbone Press.

Collected Poems: with Notes Toward the Memoirs of Djuna Barnes, edited by Phillip Herring and Osías Stutman, collects (at last!) the poetry, plays, and notes toward her memoirs that Barnes wrote during her “reclusive years” (the last forty years of her life), as well as most of the poetry she wrote during her pre-Paris and Parisian expatriate years. (The exceptions being, primarily, the poetry published in *Ryder* and *The Ladies Almanac*. The introduction includes a brief biography outlining, among other parts of her life, her eight-year relationship with Thelma Woods, her father’s belief in (and practice of) bigamy, her probable abuse at his hand, her years as a journalist “for every paper in NYC, except the *Times*” and her bawdy wit. Meticulously researched and documented. \$24.95, University of Wisconsin.

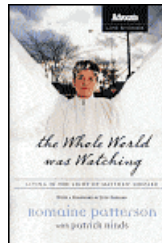


Now in Paperback:

Adrienne Rich’s **The School Among the Ruins: Poems 2000-2004**, \$13.95, Norton.



Lives



“One person can make a difference” Matthew Sheppard told his friend Romaine (Patterson) the last time she saw him. And it’s clear, in reading her memoir **The Whole World Was Watching: Living in the Light of Matthew Shepard**, that she’s taken that belief to heart: first by organizing her friends into “angels” (with seven-foot wing spans) to encircle Fred Phelps and render his band of hate-mongers invisible - and then by learning how to survive the loss, to work for change, to have *fun* working for change, and by showing up and telling the truth. And she (or cowriter Patrick Hinds) can tell a good story. A great read for twenty-somethings and teens trying to find their own lives, and a great antidote for cynicism at any age. She currently cohosts Sirius Radio’s *Derek and Romaine Show*. \$23.95, Advocate/Alyson.

Women who read *Wild Girls* and want more and women who are taking on the Djuna Barnes collection (above),

can turn to **Women Together/Women Apart: Portraits of Lesbian Paris**, for more insight into the times. Here scholar Tirza True Latimer considers how lesbian artists working in Paris during the vibrant years between WWI and WWII began to create, shape, and circulate the first visual models of lesbianism and explores the ways these images offered lesbians a collective sense of identity and mutual recognition. She uses gender theory, along with visual, cultural, and historical analyses, to portray the impact of sexual politics on Paris' cultural life in a time and place where women's rights to political, professional, economic, domestic, and sexual autonomy had yet to be acknowledged culturally or legally. \$24.95 paper, Rutgers.



Latimer has also created a traveling exhibition, "Acting Out: Claude Cahun and Marcel Moore," featuring the work and relationship of two of the women she highlights in **Women Together**. It's currently in Seattle at the Frye.



[back to top](#)

On The Ice

What is it with lesbians and Antarctica? Maybe it's the penguins. Or the challenge. Or that old sense of derring-do.... Or maybe we're just making up for lost time, since women were barred from Antarctica until the 1970s....

Those of us who will never get there ourselves can read about it in **On the Ice: An Intimate Portrait of Life at McMurdo Station**. Gretchen Legler writes about her five-month stay, about the land, the light, the ice, the research projects, the Zen of getting anything done under such difficult circumstances, the support workers – and about falling in love with one of the women on the electrical crew. She was in Antarctica courtesy of the National Science Foundation Artists and Writers Program. \$15.95, Milkweed.



Get the next generation off to an eager start with Lucy Jane (This Wild Silence, Working Parts, Sweat) Bledsoe's **How to Survive in Antarctica**, a mix of memoir, survival tips, and travelogue that takes elementary school readers on a vicarious trip to Antarctica. \$16.95 cloth, Holiday House.

Moving to the Northern extreme, Sue Carter writes about the first women's expedition to ski to the North Pole in

Ordinary Women: An Arctic Adventure. She explores the events in our lives that lead us to these adventures, the dynamics of women making difficult decisions under maximum stress, and about taking responsibility for errors amid an absence of blame. \$29.95 cloth, Michigan State University Press.

In **Breaking the Trail: A Climbing Life** legendary trailblazer Arlene Blum (*Annapurna: A Woman's Place*) reflects on her journey from her over-protected youth in Chicago to the tops of some of the highest peaks on Earth, on the ways her childhood fueled her need to climb, how climbing liberated her from her childhood, and on her scientific life, which includes challenging gender stereotypes and banning two cancer-causing chemicals. \$26, Simon & Schuster.

More photos at:

<http://www.arleneblum.com/>



[back to top](#)

Humor

Revenge of the Paste Eaters: Memoirs of a Misfit

picks up where Cheryl Peck's *Fat Girls and Lawn Chairs* (\$12.95, Warner) left off – mid-life with a fat, middle-aged dyke with a wicked comment on all aspects of small-town Michigan life. It's a sense of humor that coastals aren't equipped to understand, unless they've *seriously* practiced their cultural diversity appreciation skills. But if you live or grew up in the mid-country lands, Peck is a deadpan riot. The cover on the new book is good, but the cover on *Lawn Chairs* brilliantly sets you up to enjoy the book. If you haven't read either, start with *Fat Girls and Lawn Chairs*. \$12.95, 5 Spot/Time Warner.



Friday Night Reads and Action Romances

Marianne Martin (*Mirrors, Under the Witness Tree*) returns with **Dawn of the Dance**, a coming-of-age-of-a-young-dyke tale crossed with intergenerational romance, jealous men, loving through the difficult times, and rebuilding careers as needed. Kudos to Martin for writing about the complexity of our flawed but well intended communities, and for her tip-of-the-hat to the softball networks that are, for many of us, core communities.

\$12.95, Bywater. And watch for Martin's forthcoming novel, **Never Ending** (February 15, \$13.95, Bywater).

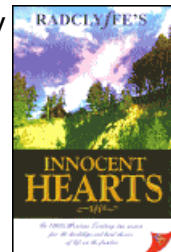
Bait's radical urban musician Jax is pretty happy with her life: She makes music, manages financially, and avoids getting *too* close to anyone. It suits her. And she's managed to maintain a loving, if not close, relationship with brother, Danny, and a more distant relationship with the rest of her evangelical, fundamentalist family. So maybe holidays with the family are a bit depressing, but she avoids them, OK? But when Danny introduces her to his fiancé, Jenn, the sparks begin to fly. If Jenn is the nice Christian girl she purports to be, what's with the chemistry between them? And why does Danny keep insisting that the three of them spend time together? Kudos to first-time author Loren Stone for her insightful presentation of dykes raised in conservative, faith-based communities. 360 pages, \$19.95, Baitbook.net. If you order online you get to choose your cover:



www.baitbook.net/

Bold Strokes Books

The incorrigible, inimitable, prolific Radclyffe is back with **Honor Reclaimed**, the latest in the Honor series featuring Secret Service Agent Cameron Roberts who has sworn to protect – and love – the President's daughter, Blair Powell. Honor – and their very futures – are at stake, as Cam and her team give their all to extricate Blair from a violent confrontation with evil.... \$15.95, 275 pages of page-turning drama.



Radclyffe shifts to a different clime and style with **Innocent Hearts**, a tale set in 1860s Montana featuring Kate Beecher, a young woman who has just moved West from Boston with her parents, and Jessie Forbes, a “pa’s boy” who learned ranching at her father’s knee, carried the ranch on after his death and became good enough at it to earn the town’s respect... and Kate’s. \$15.95, 260 pages.

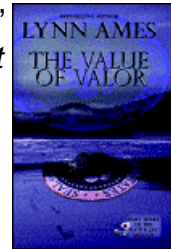
In Bold Stroke’s adventure-romances, lesbians are everywhere, and there’s never a lavender ceiling: In **The Devil Inside**, Cain Casey, mobster with a heart of gold and the head of a powerful New Orleans crime family, has long since lost her heart to the Wisconsin farm girl who walked out on Cain and their son. But now Emma Verde is back. But what does she *really* want? There’s no doubt that Cain will survive this and all the other challenges to her power and position, the question is how.... **The Devil Inside** is the first in the Casey Family Sagas, written by Cuban and New Orleans writer Ali Vali. Look for the sequel in June. \$15.95, 300 pages.

Protector of the Realm by Swedish writer Gun Brooke, promises “daring intergalactic romance against a backdrop of space adventure.... With the fate of entire civilizations at risk, the galactic battleground makes for unusual alliances and unexpected passions as two women from very different worlds join forces....” \$15.95, 350 pages.

The Temple at Landfall follows **The Walls of Westernfort** and **Rangers at Roadsend** in British writer Jane Fletcher’s Celaeno Series. Even the best of goddess religions can grow, well, stale at best, oppressive at worst and, despite all prohibitions, there’s a real and vibrant attraction growing between Lynn, of the temple, and Kim Ramon, an officer in the squadron of Rangers assigned to protect her.... \$15.95, 300 pages.

Intaglio Publications

The Value of Valor is the third in Lynn Ames’ trilogy (after *The Price of Fame* and *The Cost of Commitment*). It follows the lives and adventures of high-profilers Katherine Kyle (news anchor, friend of governors and presidents) and *Time* magazine reporter Jay Parker in and out of career changes, homophobia (when your relationship can *almost* cost you your career), and surviving media assault. Start at the beginning, start at the end, it all works. Ames’ political, critical backdrops add needed depth to the genre. 280 pages, \$16.75.



Bella Books

Bella is up and running full speed, and is just about as prolific as god(dess)mother Naiad Press always was. Bella is now working on multiple fronts: publishing their own books, running a distribution wing to distribute smaller publishers’ books to the book trade, and selling other publishers’ titles online via “The Bella Bookshelf,” which currently features titles from Bold Strokes and Rising Tide. Bella is also running an online bargain books shelf featuring remaindered titles from Spinsters, Naiad, and elsewhere, mostly at \$3 a title. The quick shopper will find a half dozen Jane Rule titles, a British edition of Katherine V. Forrest’s *Daughters of a Coral Dawn*, classic of classics, Gail Wilhelm’s *Torchlight to Valhalla*, and a tiny collection of audio books.

www.BellaBooks.com

Bella’s recent titles include Karin Kallmaker’s latest. **Just Like That** pits vintner Syrah Ardani against corporate turnaround specialist Toni Glanchar as Syrah fights to reclaim her family’s vineyard and winery that her father endangered, “just like that” by accepting outside investors who now want to see some



profit. Set in Northern California's beautiful wine country and lesbian communities. Karin Kallmaker is *always* at her best. \$12.95

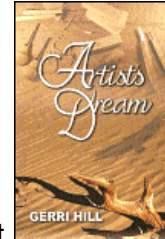
Vengeance is ours in Peggy Herring's **Midnight Rain**. Someone – a woman – is appearing at just the right



moment to intervene in attempted rapes in parking lots and late night laundromats and then the woman – and the would-be rapists – disappear. The survivors want to thank her and, with the help of one of the survivor's mother's *curandera*, they might be able to.

Midnight Rain offers a rich slice of life as the survivors work to make sense out of their new, changed lives, make a few false steps, and help each other heal. It's my favorite kind of Friday Night Read: not all of the characters are white, arrogance and entitlement are not virtues, and romance *isn't* the piece that holds the book together. \$12.95.

Cassie's fundamentalist preacher father still haunts the inside of her mind even though she's moved far away, built a life around the driftwood sculptures she creates, and developed a friendship circle made mostly of lesbians – even though she isn't one. That's the premise of Gerri Hill's **Artist's Dream**. But time heals, and when a new-to-town architect stops to admire her work at the county fair, Cassie finds that time might have achieved a little more healing than she's ready to acknowledge. BTWOF welcomes this little substrata of lesbian lit portraying the lives of lesbians with homophobic, fundamentalist families. (See *Bait*, above.) \$12.95.



I haven't read it yet but here's what ex-bookseller Suzanne Corson wrote to say about Diane Tremain Braund's **Tides of Passion**: "A wonderful 'Friday Night Read.' Besides the fact that it was over 380 pages(!) - my customers would have *loved* it!- it has a wonderful supporting cast of characters. I wish there was a little more about some of them, but the curmudgeonly Elizabeth character is a treasure. And the book featured a scene you rarely see: one friend telling another friend a hard truth. I applauded the author for including this." \$12.95.



And a few more new Bellas:

Bell, Book and Dyke: New Exploits of Magical Lesbians, the latest in the Bella After Dark series, features novellas from Barbara Johnson, Karin Kallmaker, Therese Szymanski, and Julia Watts. That, of course, would be magic at the intersections of desire, lust, and love. 350 pages, \$14.95.

And watch for: **Reunion**, by Jane Frances, \$12.95, Lyn Denison's **Always And Forever**, \$13.95; **Back Talk** by Saxon Bennet, \$13.95; and **The Perfect Valentine: Erotic Lesbian Valentine Stories** edited by Therese Szymanski and Barbara Johnson, \$15.95. See "The Crime Scene" for Bella's mysteries.



[back to top](#)

The Crime Scene

By Nan Cinnater



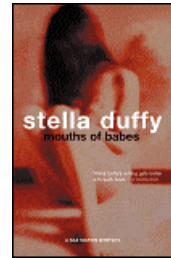
Wow! 2005 was a great year for lesbian mysteries, as I realized when I made my list for Lammy nominations. This month's column is particularly packed with high-quality entries that manage to be innovative and still remain true to the genre. Several of these titles qualify for my list of the best lesbian mysteries of 2005, which you can find at the end of this column.

First, though, there's a landmark anthology of lesbian mystery stories edited by Katherine V. Forrest, **Women of Mystery** (\$17.95, Harrington Park Press). (The title may be a tad bland, but at least it says "lesbian" right on the cover - front and back.) I hate short stories, but I was grabbed by a number of these, with their great titles ("The Intersection of Camp and St. Mary" by J.M. Redmann), opening lines ("I started to suspect she was a werewolf on our first date"), and remarkably sharp, vivid writing. The roster of authors includes some of my favorites (Forrest and Redmann, Randye Lordon, Martha Miller), as well as first-time authors and some writers not known for mysteries (Karla Jay, Victoria Brownworth). It was especially good to see a story by Diana McRae, who disappeared from the scene after publishing a great lesbian private eye novel, *All the Muscle You Need*, back in the Eighties. Although the selection of authors and stories is diverse, the (non)representation of lesbians of color is disappointing.

Rose Beecham, author of **Grave Silence** (\$15.95, Bold Strokes Books), is the mystery pseudonym of romance writer Jennifer Fulton. By that or any other name, Rose Beecham certainly can write! *Grave Silence* is set in the

remote Four Corners area of the Southwest, and Beecham's descriptions of the landscape rival Nevada Barr's. Detective Jude Devine, lesbian and ex-FBI agent, brings some secrets of her own to the Montezuma County Sheriff's Office. When the body of a teenage girl is discovered with a stake through her heart, Jude finds ties to a fundamentalist Mormon sect that practices polygamy. The story involves graphic, but not gratuitous, violence and abuse. With social consciousness, a believable plot and strong characters, *Grave Silence* is an exemplary thriller - with one exception. Why should such a smart, tough, admirable heroine be in the closet?

Mouths of Babes (\$15.00, Serpents Tail), the fifth Saz Martin mystery by Stella Duffy, is brilliant and unsettling, a twenty-first century version of classic psychological suspense. Literally and figuratively scarred by her work as a private eye, Saz has retired to full-time motherhood, living in London with her lover Molly and infant daughter Matilda. Their little family is dealing with the death of Molly's father, when Saz's past shows up on the doorstep. Will was one of a group of schoolyard bullies who tormented Saz when they were teenagers, but worse things are haunting him. The unfolding of this secret history is worthy of Rendell or Highsmith. (For information on the rest of the Saz Martin series, see [TLE #3](#).)



Memories to Die For by Adrian Gold (\$12.95, Bella), has many virtues, not the least being the feeling of dropping in on someone else's life-someone smart enough and likeable enough to become a friend. Gold's realistic lesbian heroine, Rachel Katz, is a Seattle psychologist complete with friends, ex-clients, a dog, and a community. Rachel is just coming out of the traditional Jewish mourning period for her lover, and thus just starting to date, when she is asked to investigate the state of mind of a colleague who may have committed suicide. The reader is immersed in the professional and academic life of psychologists, including the controversy over "recovered memories" of sexual abuse. Any veteran mystery reader could guess the outcome, but getting there is highly satisfying.

Lillian Byrd, heroine of a Detroit-based series by Elizabeth Sims, is an odd duck, and getting odder with every book. In **Easy Street**, fourth in the series (after **Holy Hell**, **Damn Straight**, and **Lucky Stiff**, all \$13.95, Alyson), Lillian is so broke she seems close to becoming a bag lady, until a friend offers her work helping to renovate a "fixer-upper" of an old house. The plot thickens, with hidden treasure in the walls of the house and the death of a street person. Lillian is a funny and charming, albeit eccentric, narrator. In fact, a couple of

scenes had me laughing out loud, especially one where Lillian poses as "Stacey Wounded Deer" to get on the good side of a New Age Native American wannabe. Other times the mood shifts drunkenly from hilarious to heartbreaking. *Easy Street* is great fun but also strangely disturbing.

A Time to Cast Away by Pat Welch (\$12.95, Bella) is consistently *noir* - which the dictionary defines as "bleakly pessimistic" - but in a good way. Former cop and private eye Helen Black has no place to go but up, after getting out of prison for murder. She returns to Berkeley, California, where she's barely making ends meet with temp jobs and the help of a couple of old friends. One night Helen goes home from a bar with Alice, a pathetic drunk who cries over her lost love all night. One week later Alice is dead. Welch writes a highly readable, straightforward private eye story, which, like a shot of whiskey, will sometimes hit the spot when nothing else will do.



Briefly Noted

In Too Deep by Ronica Black (\$15.95, Bold Strokes) is a twisting tale of forbidden lesbian love between a newbie homicide detective and the chief suspect in a serial killer case.

The Missing Page by Patty G. Henderson is the third supernatural mystery about Brenda Strange, a psychic detective based in Tampa, Florida. The first two were **The Burning of her Sin** and **Tangled and Dark** (all \$12.95, Bella). In this one, Brenda is tracking down an elusive rare manuscript in the Florida Keys.



The Next World by Ursula Steck (\$12.95, Bella) features Anna Spring, a self-described "one-eyed German American of Asian descent," who has left her former profession as a genetics researcher in Germany to work as a security guard in San Francisco. When an employee from Anna's job disappears, the trail leads to a sinister fertility clinic.

Nan's Picks: Best Lesbian Mysteries of 2005

Darkness Descending by Penny Micklebury (\$14.95, Kings Crossing Press; see [TLE #19](#)).

Desert Blood: The Juarez Murders by Alicia Gaspar De Alba (\$23.95, Arte Publico Press; see [TLE #15](#)).

Easy Street by Elizabeth Sims (\$15.95, Alyson, see above).

Grave Silence by Rose Beecham (\$15.95, Bold Strokes Books, see above).

Hostage to Murder by Val McDermid (\$12.95, Bywater; see [TLE #15](#)).

Mouths of Babes by Stella Duffy (\$15.00, Serpent's Tail, see above).

Murder on the Mother Road by Brenda Weathers
(\$12.95, New Victoria; see [TLE #19](#)).



[back to top](#)

A Few from the Lambda Book Reports That Never Were

Here are an essay and a few more reviews that had been scheduled for the issues of the *Lambda Book Report* that were never published.

The Power of Mystery Fiction - An Essay

by Judith Markowitz, Ph.D.

Authors of gay and lesbian detective fiction recognize the power of mysteries to educate and inform a broad spectrum of readers. Author and publisher Joan Drury exploited that power to bring feminist issues to new audiences. "I knew that people who knew none of the statistics about violence against women would be reading my books if I wrote them as mysteries," Her belief was validated when one of her mysteries was nominated for an Edgar. Like the writers of hard-boiled and noir mysteries, Katherine V. Forrest, Jack Dickson, Claire McNab, and others use murder mysteries to expose the panoply of crimes that are committed every day through abuse of power and privilege. When she began writing her first mystery series in the 1980s, Barbara Wilson/Sjoholm saw detective novels as a tool for bringing social consciousness to fiction. "I thought the mystery - with its format of question-asking, issues of social justice and crime, and its accusations and vengeance - was well suited for that."

From the start, these and other authors have used mysteries to inform, to attack, and to undermine stereotypes about gay men and lesbians, sometimes employing humor to accomplish these objectives. Lou Rand's *The Gay Detective*, the earliest documented gay detective novel, is a parody of hard-boiled mysteries. Among other twists, his novel casts a man with "an unconsciously un-masculine air" as the detective - a role reserved for ultra-masculine men - and ascribes a talent for interior decorating to a heterosexual football star. Joseph Hansen approached the same task using more sober mysteries.

"In *Fadeout* I wanted to tell a rattling good mystery yarn, but I also wanted to turn a few more common beliefs about homosexuals inside out and upside down, as many as I could in a space of fifty-thousand words."

These authors are not simply trying to educate

heterosexual readers. Many of them write for gay and lesbian audiences with the intention of turning common *internalized* homophobic beliefs “inside out and upside down.” Some of the characters they create are virtually indistinguishable from the heterosexual characters that abound in mysteries. “I want readers to see that what makes a person gay is not the only thing that defines him or her,” Joan Albarella points out. “I also want readers to see that gays come in all shapes, sizes, economic conditions, and even physical conditions.” Indeed, authors of gay and lesbian mysteries have created detectives who come from a variety of racial and ethnic backgrounds whose ages range from sixteen to over sixty, who represent all economic classes and financial situations, and who were raised in Catholic, Protestant, Jewish, Native American, and Wiccan traditions which they currently embrace, ignore or reject.

The fact that many authors describe their gay and lesbian detectives using terms such as *brave*, *decent*, *self-accepting*, and *role model*, demonstrates their intent to go beyond simply creating characters that are comparable to heterosexuals. “I was conscious growing up of the complete lack of any sort of lesbian role model, anything out there that would make young women growing up gay feel less like a freak,” says Val McDermid, “so I wanted Lindsay [Gordon] to be a kind of Everydyke.” Role models for healthy, long-term relationships - a rare phenomenon in the mystery genre as a whole - are core elements of the series of a number of authors, notably Lev Raphael, Michael Craft, Vicki McConnell, Fred Hunter, and Mark Richard Zubro. “There would be no question,” asserts Hunter, “about the fact they are simply a very happily married couple.” Following the lead of Blacksploitation films of the 1970s, some authors go beyond role models to create super-heroes who serve as antidotes to the homophobic stereotypes in our daily lives.

Some authors consciously forge new images of individuals within our community who are frequent objects of disdain or homophobic hatred. “If we truly believe it’s important to embrace diversity,” argues Ellen Hart, “we should also embrace diversity within our own ranks.” Authors of gay and lesbian detective fiction do precisely that. Among their detectives number a male transvestite and several cross-dressing butches, feminine lesbians and gay men, one youthful bar dancer, an HIV-positive journalist, and an elderly private investigator who combats ageism as well as sexism and homophobia. Included among the series-level secondary gay/lesbian characters are a wheelchair-bound private investigator, sex workers, and a drag-queen.

All these characters – those who resemble heterosexuals and those who do not – capture the spectrum of our colorful community. By casting these characters as savvy detectives and by giving them

admirable human faces, authors of gay and lesbian detective fiction use the power of mystery fiction to make us visible and reaffirm our lives.

Judith Markowitz is the author of The Gay Detective Novel: Lesbian and Gay Main Characters and Themes in Mystery Fiction. She has a doctoral degree in linguistics.



[back to top](#)

Locas: The Maggie and Hopey Stories

by Jaime Hernandez

reviewed by Marissa Pareles

With its punk-inspired DIY attitude, (magical) realism, and raw, gorgeous depiction of Latinas and Chicanas, *Love and Rockets* has, for over twenty years, been a gold standard of contemporary comics. But if you haven't already been reading it for years, you might skip lightly through the first 45 sections of *Locas: The Maggie and Hopey Stories*, which introduces the dynamic queerotic duo and the series' convoluted plotlines. In short: freelance mechanic Maggie Chascarillo runs into scores of old acquaintances, a bone-chillingly evil provincial boss and his rapacious kin, and a quasi-dead supernatural dinosaur while stranded in deep jungle in the sort-of Latin American nation of Zimbodia. Maggie's not a superhero - she's just our heroine, a multiplicitous girl with a buzzing sex drive, body issues, and hundreds of friends and relatives - and she doesn't react well to danger, so the dark supernatural element that threads erratically through this volume doesn't do much for her character - or for the reader's tenuous grasp on the interweaving plots. Her connection to her punk-rocker roommate, Esperanza "Hopey" Leticia Glass, on the other hand, sizzles. Hopey, a half-white dyke bass player, is a series regular usually appearing in the context of her messed-up family. She's got it for Maggie.



It's this fraught love, which tours buddyhood, sexual passion, estrangement, and other strange geographies, that holds the Maggie stories together. Before being gathered together here by Jaime Hernandez they were scattered across volumes of the 1500-page *Love and Rockets* series created by Hernandez and his brother Gilbert. In 1985, barely grown-up Hopey and Maggie are shackled up in Hoppers, their native LA barrio, like girlfriends...or is it roommates? "Just 'cause me and Maggie live together and sleep in the same bed doesn't mean anything. Just 'cause we hold hands while walking down the street doesn't mean shit!" Hopey tells her

jealous, homophobic brother. But we're not so sure. After their one sex scene, Maggie claims the nookie is casual. And we might even believe her, in context. But elsewhere they're clearly girlfriends: lying in bed topless, for instance, and fighting over Hopey's infidelity with ex-girlfriend Terry: "I can imagine what goes on while I'm away!" "Well, shit, Mag! What the hell am I supposed to do while you're away? Lock myself up and wait for you to come home?" If you're a fan reading this book (as I did) to suss out the details of their relationship, then you'll probably end up more baffled than you started.

Unusual for a comic series, the stories focus instead, and with similar sensual intensity, on Maggie's tortured career as a jack-of-all-trades: mechanic, short-order cook, wrestler, and occasional hooker. In a flashback strip, 13-year-old Maggie gets her itchy hands on a boat: "One of these days I'm gonna be a pro... I'm gonna be a famous mechanic and travel all over the world fixing rocket ships, robots, an' maybe even plumbing." She's not wrong. Hernandez doesn't pin down Maggie (a.k.a. Margaret, Perla, and Shrimp) who balloons from skinny to busting-at-the-seams hot and hooks up with everybody from a chivalrous trick to true-love Hopey to a dangerous fugitive who initiates a plea for safe harbor by flinging her onto his bed and covering her mouth.

"I can always tell how it tears you up inside when she does that. She has no class at all," says Terry. "Maggie can't help it if she likes guys too much," replies Hopey.

All this while working in highly physical, male-dominated jobs and looking out for number one. Maggie's vulnerability - and frequent foolishness - allow this tough girl the bravery of a bottom and a femme. Unlike Hopey, who loves deeply but with a keen sense of self-preservation, Mags goes through pain, danger, and denigration simply for the sexual pleasure she needs - and for a buck or two - or to stay in her male-dominated job. The ending - for this collection at least - lets the made-for-each-other heroines stay queer and realistic after years of rocky intimacy. When was the last time a straight guy wrote *that* story? And it's probably the last time, except in Cherríe Moraga, we saw such well-drawn queer Chicanas.

The association between Los Bros Hernandez and Fantagraphics is clearly beneficial: the design looks awesome, and the brothers have recently released 13 new issues of the previously presumed-dead series. Look out for the grown-up adventures of *las locas invincibles*. \$49.95 Hardcover, 704 pages, Fantagraphics.

Marissa Pareles is a journalist and editor writing on food, health, and travel. Her travel journalism appears in The

Rough Guides NYC, The Village Voice, *and* Out Traveler. *Find her edgy, experimental fiction in* Hot Lesbian Erotica, Best Lesbian Erotica, *and* Best of Best Lesbian Erotica 2. *Watch for her forthcoming anthology, Cheap: Jews Write about Sex, Money, and Class; check her Web site for submission details:*

www.marissapareles.com

.....

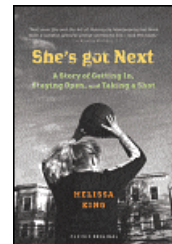
[back to top](#)

She's Got Next: A Story of Getting In, Staying Open, and Taking a Shot

by Melissa King

reviewed by Gwendolyn Bikis

Basketball is a sweet sport: it requires little space or equipment, its rhythms are hypnotic, most of its plays and players are quick and graceful. The game carries the trappings of democracy - even a woman can be a basketball star, now, thanks to the WNBA - and the mythic aura of freedom and equality. Small wonder that so much fluid and poetic prose has been written about basketball.



She's Got Next is a memoir about basketball; it was excerpted in *Sports Illustrated* and then anthologized in *The Best American Sports Essays*. In the prologue, Melissa King explains her love affair with basketball in almost-spiritual terms:

"I've played because, when the game is good, when everyone is doing, not thinking, it happens, little stillnesses in the moments when you see your open man and nothing else, or you feel your shot going in the hoop as it leaves your hands, or you share a laugh with someone you've never spoken to. Race, money, gender, age, they're still there. But the junk we're all saddled with is gone." (p. 1)

King's narrative takes the reader from her childhood in rural Northern Arkansas, to the (non-South Side) streets of Chicago, and out to Southern California. She recounts her memories of Southern seasons spent in the family driveway, dribbling and leaping beneath a basketball hoop. These merge into memories of her white father playing basketball with the line guys he supervised, and how loose and free and happy it was, if only for slightly longer than a Mississippi minute.

The author seems happy to bask in blissful moments of inter-racial accord afforded by the game of basketball and she seems proud of those times when she is accepted as

an almost-equal on the court by a group of men, but she seems terrified of on-court encounters with lesbians: Her compulsive need to distance herself from, and to try to get the reader to dis-identify with, lesbians becomes more and more evident as the book proceeds. Apparently homophobia is so compulsory that, even in the midst of a game when everyone is “doing, not thinking,” it doesn’t *require* any thought. *She’s Got Next* is full of swipes at women who look like men, women who wear their hair in crewcuts or have hairy armpits, women who dress and strut like men, and at (two) lesbians who comprise an entire “gay invasion” into a pick-up game. Even as King basks in the freedom and sheer exhilaration of escape from the boundaries of gender roles, she automatically equates female strength with lesbianism or - more horrifying - with butchness.

This is a short book with fairly large print and wide margins; it’s a quick, casual read, perfect for waiting rooms and medium-length airplane trips, but only if one can stomach unexamined homophobia and the type of racial awareness that mostly designates only *people of color* by their race. The author criss-crosses the country in search of pick-up games, attends a woman’s basketball camp craftily planted with lesbians who titillate, and inevitably begins to grow old. When age, the death knell for a basketball player, strikes Melissa King, she becomes a coach for a girls’ basketball team.

Along the way, the author accumulates a boyfriend who is barely mentioned, and a son who seems to pop out of nowhere - he’s two years old before the reader knows of his existence or of his existence’s circumstances. It is as if these accoutrements are mentioned not because they are important to the narrative, but because they seem to represent a mainstream lifestyle where nobody would dare think that a female basketball player is that most dreaded of people: a dyke.

King’s prose is clunky as a double-dribble. The game’s mesmerizing choreography deserves better. I much prefer reading John Edger Wideman, whose daughter plays ball, and whose many basketball memoirs capture the game so well, or the near-poetry of Susan Straight who, like King, also began her writing career in the sports columns:

"I had watched a hundred times while he positioned himself surely, his hands slanting nervously up and down like fins to guide him in his own part of the water, his long arms fencing out the others behind him. He would sway for a second, his mouth hung in a triangle and eyes rolled upward, waiting for the ball to leap within reach.... It was like he knew instantly from the rotation of the shot where it would fly".

-from “Off-Season,” in *Aquaboogie*; Milkweed Editions, p. 127

\$13.00; 180 pgs., Houghton-Mifflin.

Gwendolyn Bikis's novel, Your Loving Arms, was published in 2002 by Alice Steet Editions/Harrington Park. Excerpts from her novella, Cleo's Gone, have appeared in Hers3, Close Calls, The Persistent Desire, Does Your Mama Know?, The Best Lesbian Erotica 1998 and 2000, and The Best of the Best Lesbian Erotica. She was a recipient of the John Preston Erotic Writing Award and runner-up for an Astraea Foundation's Emerging Writers' Award.

.....

[back to top](#)

Impossible Desires: Queer Diasporas and South Asian Public Cultures

by **Gayatri Gopinath**

reviewed by **Lori Saffin**

In **Impossible Desires**, Gayatri Gopinath examines a range of South Asian public and popular culture texts, including literature, film, and music, to show how the



histories of colonialism, nationalism, racism, and migration shape diasporic discourses. The author argues that dominant diasporic narratives maintain oppression because they rely upon patriarchal and heterosexist articulations. However, Gopinath focuses her discussion on the multiple forms of resistance to hegemonic conceptions of the diaspora to highlight the always competing and contradictory definitions of diasporic identities. Yet, as she illustrates throughout the text, these interventions oftentimes collude with dominant discourses, perpetuating oppression, reliance upon notions of authenticity, and a splintering of the nation/homeland from the diaspora. *Impossible Desires* offers up reconfigurations of the diaspora by placing queer South Asian female subjects as central to its meaning. Gopinath reworks the logic of diaspora through a queer *and* feminist lens, thereby disrupting heteronormativity, the presumed whiteness of queer bodies, and the disconnection of home/nation from the diaspora. The author does not simply bring into visibility a queer South Asian female subject; she also challenges the very basis of visibility and “coming out” that are so salient to Western queer identity. By rereading homosocial spaces of the home represented within various South Asian public and popular culture

narratives, Gopinath shows how queer female subjects fashion unique forms of accommodation that resist dominant ideologies and assert alternative diasporic identities.

Impossible Desires employs a queer diasporic framework that centers on queer South Asian female subjectivity and desire. She argues that queer female desire is rendered impossible within the logic of nationalism because morality, tradition, and a sense of “home” are maintained by policing the female body and sexuality. Patriarchal nationalist and diasporic narratives, thus, make “lesbianism” intelligible only outside of the home whereby queer female subjects must literally leave the nation in order to exist. South Asian queer females are forced to either remain within the oppressive and heteronormative homeland or leave the nation, seeking “refuge” in the ostensibly liberatory diaspora. This bifurcation of the home/nation from the diaspora inevitably fragments the identities of queer women of Color, reifying gender and sexual hierarchies, and enforcing heteronormativity within the “home” and nation.

Gopinath tackles the complex interconnections between nationalism, diaspora identities, and various forms of oppression by using South Asian public and popular texts to imagine a queer female subject within the home/homeland. In doing so, the author not only renders possible a queer South Asian female but also criticizes the ways in which many diasporic individuals and communities resist dominant discourses by relying upon the impossibility of a queer female subject. For example, Gopinath reads the popular music of several well-known British Asian bands of the 1990s, such as *Asian Underground*, *Asian Dub Foundation* (ADF), and *Fun'Da'Mental*. She contends that these bands, which critique globalization and racism, do so at the expense of queer female subjects because they view the effects of globalization as existing only within the public sphere. Gopinath, instead, discusses other musical, cinematic, and literary representations that provide complex readings of gendered labor intersecting with globalization and illustrate how the home is continuously created within transnational public culture, collapsing the distinction between public and private.

The author also argues that queer diasporic audiences reclaim a sense of home and homeland through their viewing of popular Indian cinema. In particular, South Asian queers utilize the Bollywood song and dance sequence as a space to imagine queer subjectivity. Gopinath asserts that it is often in moments of extreme gender conformity within the homosocial spaces of the domestic that queer female desire emerges in very disruptive ways. The representations are not deemed overtly or visibly “lesbian,” but rather provide a space of homoeroticism that challenges heteronormativity within the home, homeland, and nation. Yet, even in overtly

“lesbian” films, such as Deepa Mehta’s controversial film *Fire* (1996), because queer female desire is placed within the home, dominant ideologies of gender, sexuality, and nationality are thoroughly disrupted.

Moreover, Gopinath analyzes Shyam Selvadurai’s 1994 novel *Funny Boy* and Shani Mootoo’s 1996 novel *Cereus Blooms at Night*. Both texts refuse to separate sexuality from processes of racialization, colonialism, and migration and they rethink the category of home through a form of nostalgia. However, what is so powerful about the nostalgia evoked in these texts is that they recreate the homeland through a queer lens, allow for contradiction and conflict within a diasporic identity, and show how queer desire is central to the telling and remembering of histories.

Impossible Desires offers up alternative ways of imagining home, community, and kinship, while providing a framework for queer racially marginalized subjects to resist dominant white/Western models of queerness that rely upon visibility, “coming out,” and separating oneself from the larger heterosexual and heterosexist culture. Through an examination of South Asian public and popular culture, Gopinath places queer female bodies and desire as central to history and memory in order to envision new ways of being in a transnational world. *Impossible Desires* proposes an important and powerful critique of dominant conceptions of the nation and diaspora, revealing the potential for crucial intervention in the most marginal of spaces. \$22.95, paper, Duke University Press.

Lori Saffin is a Ph.D. candidate in American Studies who teaches Women's Studies at Washington State University and is researching the intersections of Critical Race Feminism with Queer Theory.



[back to top](#)

Anyda Marchant 1911-2006

Anyda Marchant, 94, partner, lawyer, visionary, publisher, and writer died January 11 at home in Rehoboth Beach, DE.

In 1974, after retiring from practicing law, Anyda Marchant, with her life partner Muriel Crawford, co-founded the Naiad Press, in tandem with Barbara Grier and Donna McBride. Marchant’s first novel, *The Latecomer*, published under the pen name Sarah Aldridge, was one of the two books that launched the press. Naiad went on to publish eleven Sarah Aldridge novels, and became, over time, the most influential

lesbian publishing house in history. Anyda served as Naiad's president from its inception until the mid 1990s.

In 1995 Anyda and Muriel withdrew from Naiad and founded their own publishing company, A&M Books. A&M published the last three Sarah Aldridge novels, including *O, Mistress Mine* in 2003, along with *As I Lay Dying: A Rehoboth Beach Memoir* by Fay Jacobs and, just last October, *Celebrating Hotchclaw*, a new novel by feminist literary icon Ann Allen Shockley. Passionate about supporting feminist writers, Marchant continued her publishing and mentoring activities until very recently.

Anyda was born in Rio de Janeiro, Brazil and moved with her family to Washington, D.C. when she was six. As a law student, she served as an assistant to women's rights pioneer Alice Paul, who was then doing the first research for an Equal Rights Amendment. Decades later Anyda organized the very first National Organization for Women meeting in Delaware and launched its Rehoboth chapter.

In 1933, after earning her law degree from what is now George Washington University, she was admitted to the bar and practiced in DC and Virginia, before the U.S. Court of Claims and the U.S. Supreme Court.

In 1940 Marchant was appointed assistant in the Law Library of Congress, Latin American Law section. When the man heading that department was drafted, Marchant was appointed in his place. When he returned in 1945, she relinquished the post, but declined a lesser offered position, on principle.

She returned to Rio to work, then did a brief stint as a translator at the 1948 Pan American Union Conference in Bogota, Columbia. From there she returned to Washington as one of the first female attorneys with the law firm now known as Covington and Burling. She served briefly in private practice and then with the U.S. Commerce Dept. before moving to the legal department of the World Bank where she worked for 18 years. When she retired in 1972, she and her life partner, Muriel Crawford moved to their weekend home in Rehoboth Beach, Delaware, which became the site of legendary Saturday evening salons, with cocktails, conversation and an amazingly diverse crowd - neighbors, clergy, writers, musicians, young and old, gay and straight - filling the spacious front porch. In the winter the salon would move to the couple's Pompano Beach, FL home.

Anyda Marchant is survived by Muriel Crawford, her partner of 57 years, as well as a large circle of loving friends. [A&M Books](#) will continue under the direction of Fay Jacobs, who has been managing the press for the last few years.





© 2006 Books To Watch Out For
Graphics © [Judy Horacek](#)

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