



## More Books for Women

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### About BTWOF

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

### 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

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- March 2006 -  
Volume 2 Number 3

Welcome to the sixth issue of **More Books for Women**.

This issue we highlight the books being considered for that coveted, feminist literary revenge, The Orange Prize. Founded in response to several years when only men's books were shortlisted for the Booker and Whitbread awards, the prize both brings attention to women's writing and provides male writers with an equal opportunity to complain about their work not being taken seriously.

The Orange continues to be controversial, continues to fund research on the status of women in literature, and continues to seek out both the best books and the widest diversity of writing by women. My idea of the ultimate vacation would be an island resort, tropical waters to swim in, and enough time to read them all. Enjoy!

Yours in spreading the words,  
Carol Seajay

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### The Orange Prize Long List

The U.K.-based Orange Prize for Fiction long list was announced at the London Book Fair on March 6. Established in 1996, to recognize excellence, originality, and accessibility in women's writing, the Orange carries a £30,000 (US\$60,000) purse - the largest of the big three British Literary prizes: the Man Booker, the Whitbread, and, of course, The Orange. The books must be by women and published in English.

The Orange Prize, funded by an anonymous donor, was the feminist response to watching male authors dominate the Booker and Whitbread shortlists, year after year, despite the fact that women publish roughly 70% of novels in Britain. It is, as co-founder and honorary Chair Kate Moss says, "the only prize where gender doesn't matter, where no author is 'the female

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candidate'." Great writing, she believes, is above gender. Reviewing, marketing, publishing, and expectations, sadly, are not. And the Orange Prize will cheerfully continue to create controversy and build a community of women's writing until the situation is resolved.

In announcing the long list, broadcast journalist Martha Kearney, who is chairing this year's judging panel, said, "We wanted to choose a long list which reflected the incredible range of women's fiction in what has been an excellent year. After a lively discussion, the books we picked ranged from Hendon to Tahiti, from the trauma of the second world war to a 70s sex guide. It has been a real pleasure to read not just terrific novels by some of our best known writers, but also some truly engaging first novels."

This year's list includes five first time novelists, well-loved and celebrated authors including Zadie Smith, Ali Smith, Marilynne Robinson, Sarah Waters, and first-timer on the Orange List, Joyce Carol Oates, previous Orange Prize winner Helen Dunmore (1996), nine British writers, eight from the U.S., two from Australia, and one from Tahiti.

The shortlist will be announced on April 26; the winner will be announced on June 6.

Orange also sponsors a New Writers award; its shortlist will be announced May 3. Last year's Orange Prize went to Lionel Shriver for *We Need to Talk About Kevin*, her tale of a mother unable to love her son. The New Writers Award went to Diana Evans for *26a*, her tale of London-born twins and their family's long sojourn in their mother's native Nigeria.

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

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



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## For the Kids

Recommendations from Linda Bubon



Happy Women's History Month! I recommended some great children's books last month, but there are three new ones that I must share with you. They are all for the 6-10 age group, and though they are beautifully illustrated picture books, the stories are too complex for younger ones.

**The Scarlet Stockings Spy** by Trinka Hakes Noble, with beautiful, light-filled traditional paintings by Robert Papp, makes the Revolutionary War come alive in a stirring story about a young brother and sister who spy for Washington's army. Set in Philadelphia in 1777, the story features Maddy Rose, a young girl with plenty of cool and courage. Thomson Gale, \$16.95.

**Jeannette Rankin: First Lady of Congress**, by Trish Marx with illustrations by Dan Andreasen, is a beautifully-written account of Rankin's amazing life as a rancher's daughter and as the first woman in Congress, in 1916, before women had won national suffrage. The book makes clear Rankin's two central issues — women's suffrage and keeping the country out of war — and her absolute integrity. It also captures the excitement of elections and re-elections, the force of her personality, and the fierceness of her commitment. Wonderfully stirring. McElderry Books, \$18.95.

**Marvelous Mattie: How Margaret E. Knight Became an Inventor** is yet another terrific feminist book from Emily Arnold McCully that brings to life a little-known woman whose work made a huge difference in women's lives. Ms. Knight, when still a pre-teen working in a mill in the mid-19th century, invented a safety device to prevent shuttles from zinging off looms and hurting workers. She was fascinated by machinery and went on to design a number of machines and machine parts, most notably, the machine that created square-bottomed paper bags. She had to fight in court to protect her patent rights (and she won!) and then set up her own paper company, even though she was offered \$50,000 to sell her design. This is a great story, with illustrations of her designs. Farrar, Straus & Giroux, \$16.



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## Linda Bubon is up all night reading

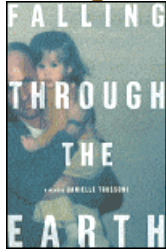
Two fascinating new adult memoirs out this month kept me up late reading.

Erica Jong's **Seducing the Demon: Writing for My Life** is hard to put down: She is so honest, so funny, so pissed-off about the turn to the right in this country that I often felt like we were having an all-night conversation, full of lively twists and turns. And she's met everybody! She talks frankly about the oddity and intensity of writing her best-selling novel before she was thirty, hobnobbing with all the young (and



lecherous old) literary lions of the 60s and 70s, and through it all, being driven by her own creative demons that demanded she write. I loved it. (On sale March 16.) Tarcher/Penguin, \$22.95.

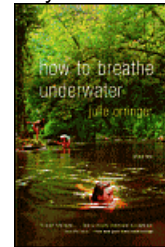
In **Falling Through the Earth** Danielle Trussoni, an impressive young writer just out of the Iowa Writer's Workshop — and winner of their prestigious James Michener/Copernicus Society of America Award — gives us a moving, vivid account of growing up with her Vietnam vet father in a little working-class town in Wisconsin. Trying to understand his trauma and its subsequent rage takes her, as an adult, to Vietnam, to crawl through the tunnels he crawled through. We are all still trying to understand the ripples and resonances of this war on its combatants, their families, and the rest of us. Henry Holt, \$23.



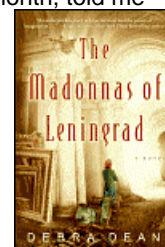
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**Ann Christophersen is reading...**

I just finished reading an absolutely amazing collection of short stories, **How to Breathe Underwater**, by Julie Orringer. Now I know some of you will be immediately dismissive, thinking “Oh, I really prefer novels.” Please, please suspend that idea if only this one time. This collection, much-heralded by readers and critics alike, might be a conversion experience for you. Every one of the stories is worth significant commentary, but I’ll say just a little bit about one. “Isabel Fish,” from which the story takes its title, opens with a hostile scene featuring a high-school aged brother and sister, the older brother taunting the younger sister, trying to frighten her about what is likely to befall her during the scuba class they are on their way to. A reprise of your usual sibling tensions, it seems at first, but you find out soon enough that it is not so benign: Sage’s sister, Maddy, has survived a recent accident that his girlfriend, Isabel, did not. His cruelty toward Maddy is high-pitched and sadistic, and Maddy (who tells the story) believes he blames her for Isabel’s death, however unreasonably. It is particularly painful to watch their relationship in the present because, as the story unfolds, you learn they were once very close, and in spite of the way Sage tortures her now, Maddy just wants her brother back. Because Orringer gives us to understand that Sage is acting out of a depth of guilt, grief, and loss that he doesn’t have the tools to deal with, we develop sympathy for him even though it is Maddy who first captures and maintains our greatest concern. In fact, the depth of feeling we have for these two is so real that we become powerfully invested in the resolution of the story: please ease their pain so ours, too, will go away. I would love to write more about how this story works and why it is so effective, but I’ll close with the mention that “how to breathe under water” serves not only as the title of the story but also as metaphor in it and a unifying element in the collection as a whole. I leave it up to you now to discover for yourself just how moving and brilliant each story is. Vintage, \$12.95.



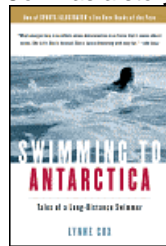
At a recent author-bookseller event I had the unexpected pleasure of sitting next to the author of a novel I had just finished reading — and liked enormously. Interestingly enough Debra Dean, whose first novel **The Madonnas of Leningrad** is just arriving in bookstores this month, told me that the novel grew out of two short stories she had been working on for awhile. (See? Another reason you “I prefer novels” people might want to give the short story a second glance.) The story is told in roughly alternating sections. Marina, the main character, is an elderly woman who is in a fairly advanced stage of dementia. She can’t remember if she has eaten breakfast or not, what event she and her husband are getting ready for, why her grown daughter is there from out of town. She is perplexed but very sweet, living in that heartbreaking stage of the disease when she



has enough clarity of thought from time to time to pretend to her husband that she knows things, remembers things that she does not. This front story alternates with that of her as a young woman during the siege of Leningrad, when Hitler's army surrounded the city for 900 days and when human suffering became extreme. She had been a docent at the Hermitage and worked with others to move thousands of art treasures to the catacombs beneath the buildings to save them from bombings and other potential damage or loss. During these three years she saves her life by saving her spirit, by remembering in great detail the paintings that once hung on the walls of the museum and the humanity they represented in the midst of mind-and-spirit numbing tragedy all around. The descriptions of the art, which includes famously beautiful paintings of Madonnas, are part of the richness of the novel, though in the end it is the act of remembering that is paramount. Some of the poignancy of the story, of course, comes from the fact that her earlier act of will — her decision to remember and the ability to use her memory to save herself — is becoming increasingly unavailable to her. It's also the case, however, that she doesn't need to save herself now — she is not alone but in the loving care of the lifelong partner who suffered and survived all that she did. There is much beauty about this very affecting novel, including the artistry of its own construction. I highly recommend it. William Morrow, \$23.95.

I have thoroughly enjoyed watching the power, grace, determination, and self-possession of many of the athletes in the Olympics, especially the women in the skiing, figure skating, speed skating, and snowboarding competitions. Watching them reminded me of two books by women athletes in other sports that I loved reading.

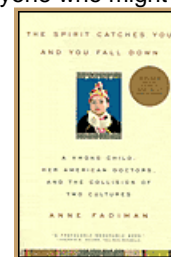
**Swimming to Antarctica: Tales of a Long-Distance Swimmer** by Lynne Cox was a story that had me mesmerized. The suspense created by her descriptions of swims in icy cold waters, battling waves and sharks and the dark and the shifting winds was as intense as the most page-turning novel I have ever read. The non-suspenseful parts were also great: how she trained, how her body was able to withstand temperatures that would kill most people in a matter of moments, what she said to herself when she was out there alone in the water for hours and hours, and the larger goals she set for herself in addition to breaking new records and swimming under circumstances never before tried. Harvest, \$14.



Melissa King, who wrote **She's Got Next: A Story of Getting In, Staying Open, and Taking a Shot**, did not have the lofty goals of Lynne Cox nor did she achieve the notoriety Lynne did — but then again, she didn't want to. What she wanted to do was play basketball — pick-up basketball — on the streets and in the parks of the various cities she lived in. Because that's how she chose to play, the people she played with were mostly men, and she had to overcome the double-challenge of being a woman and a slightly built one at that. Her stories of the various games and people she encountered along the way are colorful and well-told. What comes across, besides her passion for the game, is the importance of strategy over might and how much she learned about herself from pushing herself and having a great time simultaneously. You don't need to be an athlete to really enjoy — and learn from — these books, although that might make the reading experience even richer. Houghton Mifflin, \$13.



Although this book has been available since 1996, **The Spirit Catches You and You Fall Down: A Hmong Child, Her American Doctors, and the Collision of Two Cultures**, is one of the best and most important books I've ever read, so I'm taking this opportunity to introduce it to anyone who might have missed it. Written by Anne Fadiman, a sensitive and meticulous researcher and a most exquisite prose stylist, this book, more than any other, helped me to understand the meaning and complexities of cultural divides. The situation Fadiman explores involves two radically different perspectives: what western culture understands as a medical condition — epilepsy — is what Hmong culture understands as a gift of spiritual visitation. In each setting, the response to a child manifesting signs of epilepsy/spiritual inhabitation is easy: if the child has



epilepsy, treat her; if the child is inhabited by a spirit, protect her. Bring these settings together and there is absolute conflict. At best those involved see and appreciate that there is a conflict so they can begin, if they choose, to try to understand the deeply rooted convictions and structures that support the other side's cultural position and try to communicate across what can be a vast chasm. At worst, there's no recognition of the need for that based on the belief that one's own interpretation of a situation is simply and irrefutably correct, that all reason and ethical concern demand certain actions and the other must either agree or get out of the way. And of course, it's never quite as black-and-white as that, as Anne Fadiman so movingly shows. Sometimes the case is not one of complete negligence but rather terrible inadequacy. There are no outright bad guys in this account. There are people struggling to do what's right but making tragic and avoidable mistakes in their effort to take care of a child. I believe this book to be absolutely essential reading for everyone who works or lives in a diverse social environment, since it will help equip them to think more deeply about difference, enabling them to help others more and harm them less. It falls to the people with power — those who are in the culture that has the force of law to determine what someone from a different culture must do — to bear the responsibility for making sure that respect and understanding prevails. Farrar, Straus and Giroux, \$15.

Nancy MacLean, the author of **Freedom is Not Enough: The Opening of the American Workplace**, is Professor of History and African American Studies at Northwestern University. Hers are the perfect credentials for



analyzing why it was that gaining formal freedom was inadequate for blacks to achieve even rudimentary equality and why women would have benefited little from the Equal Rights Amendment had it passed.

This excellent history shows how real equality was only possible when African Americans, other minority groups, and other second-class citizens like women had equal access to work, when good jobs were no longer the sole provenance of white men. She offers a fascinating account of all the pieces of the long struggle to get Title VII (which prohibits job discrimination on the basis of race, color, religion, sex, or national origin) included in the Civil Rights Act of 1964. One part that had me glued to the text was that of the birth and development of the contemporary American conservatism movement in 1955. This movement was created to provide a counterpoint to the growing foothold civil rights issues were gaining through the likes of *Brown v. Board of Education*. Reading the arguments and strategies of William F. Buckley, Jr., and other leaders of this movement was absolutely shocking to me. Reading their defense of white supremacy, their justification of white men as the sole appropriate power-bearers, and their arrogant position that democracy was second to preserving the “god-given superiority of white men” and the order of the day was enraging. So was realizing that this conservative movement, born to defeat social justice, has the same intention and increasing power to do that today. This book really helped me see more deeply into very important issues, and I strongly recommend it. Russell Sage Foundation, Harvard University Press, \$35.



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### Pam Harcourt raves (and rants)

Finally another Sarah Waters novel! It's not available until mid- to-late March, but I couldn't resist telling you about it now so you can reserve your copy now and get it the moment it hits the bookstores. **The Night Watch** introduces several connecting sets of relationships among 1940s Londoners. The story is in three parts that move backward in time — we see the characters damaged by war before we see them in the midst of it. I was engrossed in every one of these stories: Kay the ambulance driver (who works the “night watch” of the title), her lover Helen and their separate connections to the



fascinating Julia, Helen's co-worker Viv and her worn-thin relationship with her married lover, and Viv's brother and his mysterious "uncle," his time in prison, and his resumed friendship with a co-prisoner were all equally satisfying to bounce between. The city's devastation is never forgotten for long — it makes every trifle sweeter and every bit of human connection that much fuller with intensity and possibility. While I missed some of the over-the-top feverishness of her Victorian books, *Night Watch* has stayed with me, continuing to unfold. It's thrilling to see Waters (*Tipping the Velvet*, *Affinity*, *Fingersmith*) do something so different in tone so incredibly well. Her fans won't be disappointed. Riverhead/Penguin, \$24.95.

The stories in Rebecca Brown's **The Last Time I Saw You** are short masterpieces, mostly of dark romantic obsession. It feels like she's crawling around inside your wrongest thoughts and telling them. Her stories capture the tricks that memory plays with even the most returned-to rememberings. Her metaphors are stunning — literal disappearance of self once one moves in with a lover, a hook hanging from the ceiling to grab underneath a sternum that keeps one from being able to get close to another, a woman controlled by a ventriloquist. One of the creepiest, best stories is about critically watching a serial killer movie with an old friend who clearly met a violent end of some sort. Her writing is immediate, intense, and full of questions. They made me hold my breath! Loved it! City Lights, \$12.95.



**Nice Big American Baby** by Judy Budnitz features more great dark stories. Families, social institutions, and governments are familiar while also being scary and off. There's a heartbreaking lost-love story of a boy and an elephant. There are disturbing stories about a family who traps salesmen in a pen in the backyard, or a woman who, through no doing of her own, ends up the subject of a ubiquitous state-sanctioned portrait. Normal themes like parent/child disconnection and fear of the foreign are taken to surreal extremes. Her voice is controlled but lively, and funny and generous. Vintage, \$13.95.



**The Days of Good Looks: The Prose and Poetry of Cheryl Clarke, 1980 to 2005** offers a great chance to watch the development of a radical voice. Cheryl Clarke has been an uncompromising voice for liberation for over 25 years. These essays find her taking on the patterns of oppression within the gay, feminist, and black movements themselves — often the hardest and bravest work. She's absolutely committed to reading, criticizing, and celebrating the work of other black women writers — reading her book makes you want to read everything she mentions in her essays. Her poems can be political, devastating, or super sexy. She's done important work, she's not been afraid to piss people off or name names, and I loved spending time with her in this book. Carroll & Graf, \$14.95.



Reading the *New York Times* correspondents'-authored book **Class Matters** was not what I thought it'd be. I was excited thinking, it's the *New York Times*, discussing class! Then I started reading and realized, "Oh yeah...it's the *New York Times*...discussing class." I define class as one's relation to the means of production; they're not so big with the concrete definition. However, there was still a lot for me to get out of it. These are mostly case histories, and although the things they demonstrate are not incredible breakthroughs - like that a rich person's heart attack and recovery and a poor person's heart attack and recovery are very, very different things - there were things I didn't know about that gave me the total creeps. Like how the new, extremely rich rich and the old, normal rich are at odds, and they go nuts showing off their boats. And...how evangelical Christianity is on the rise among the rich, and it used to really be associated with the middle class. Mostly I really got into some of the personal stories, and my heart broke for the choices people had to make. I think this is a perfect, documentary-like, convincing gift for those weird people who argue that class doesn't matter or doesn't exist



— someone is related to those people and has to buy them gifts, right? Times Books, \$14.

Editor's note: For some more, ah, progressive-based approaches to class matters, look to **Where We Stand; Class Matters** by Bell Hooks (Routledge, \$17.95) and **Class Matters: Cross-Class Alliance Building for Middle-Class Activists** by Betsy Leondar-Wright. New Society Publishers, \$18.95.



Tish Hayes recommends.....

**Sexy Chix**, edited by Diana Schutz, is an anthology created to show the wealth and breadth of women cartoonists in a notoriously male-oriented industry. The short comics collected here run the spectrum of genre and style — both in narrative and art. Love, sex, abuse, fantasy, and loss are addressed in stories that are laugh out loud funny and in stories that made me cry. The contributors include Jill Thompson, Colleen Doran, Trina Robbins, Roberta Gregory, and even a story written by Joyce Carol Oates. I loved the book most for its introduction to talented women I would have never found on my own. This Dark Horse publication can be found at your local comic book store, if it's not at your bookstore. \$12.95.



**Homewrecker: An Adultery Reader** captures the eroticism, angst, excitement, and terror of affairs in this sexy and subversive collection edited by Daphne Gottlieb. Not only is the writing superb, but all of the voices are unique: straight and queer, poetic and funny, heartbreaking and affirming. The very nature of the collection challenges the traditional boundaries of relationships, and every writer accomplishes the job of rooting out and laying bare the complex dynamic of love and desire. Soft Skull Press, \$13.

Gina Frangello's debut novel, **My Sister's Continent**, is a dark, but beautifully written retelling of Freud's "Dora" case study. It is also a story about family and the bonds that tie us together as well as the secrets and silences that may never let us be close. Kirby and Kendra, the women we are trying to understand, are twins who seem very different on the surface but whose lives are intertwined and mirrored to each other in complex ways. It is Kendra's mysterious disappearance that prompts Kirby's investigation into her sister's life, and the narrative she creates strives to give her sister a voice that is honest and real. *My Sister's Continent* is, at its core, about exploring the lengths we will go to find the truth of ourselves. The journey found here is painful but one I will not forget for a long time. Chiasmus Press, \$12.



I have never been so comfortable in my midwestern identity as I was while reading **Skin**, by Kellie Wells. The residents of What Cheer, Kansas have stories to tell, philosophies to ponder, pain to exorcise, and skin to heal. God and magic are equal players in this small midwestern town, both providing mystery and comfort to Ivy who discovers her own skin by tracing the scars her boyfriend wears, to Mrs. McCorkle who sees other's truths more clearly than her own, to Ansel Dorsett who desperately seeks spiritual illumination, to Rachel whose attempts to knead pain out of other's bodies can never rid her own of the weight of her father's abuse. Wells lets each of her characters speak for themselves in this novel made up of many voices. Kellie Wells took my breath away with her luminous prose in *Skin*: there were sentences that stunned me and that I read again and then again just because they were beautiful. University of Nebraska, \$27.95.



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## Mysteries

By Nan Cinnater



Some of us love mysteries not only because they are plot-driven, suspenseful fiction, but because, like Shakespeare's comedies, they disrupt and then restore order, possibly even justice. However, it's harder and harder these days to get order restored without first going through horrifying violence, forensic gore, child abuse, or other evils which we only wish were unspeakable. British mysteries usually offer a more reserved and literate approach to the murder problem. Here is a sampling of some that kept me up without giving me nightmares.

Those who like P.D. James or Elizabeth George will enjoy Deborah Crombie's **In a Dark House** (\$7.50, Avon), her tenth mystery featuring Scotland Yard Superintendent Duncan Kincaid and his partner in love and police work, Detective Inspector Gemma James. A serial arsonist is burning down warehouses in London's Southwark neighborhood, leaving behind an unidentified body that might be one of four different missing women. The various plot strands dovetail beautifully as the tension mounts. Duncan and Gemma are extremely likeable characters whose domestic issues are neatly intertwined with the crime-solving. This is one of Crombie's best. My favorite remains the very feminist **Dreaming of the Bones** (\$6.99, Avon), not first in the series but a great place to start. Crombie's next is **Water Like a Stone** (\$23.95, William Morrow).

*"Good morning, Lady Williams. I am looking for Lady Barlow."*

*"You will have to coax her out from under that table."*

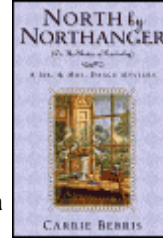
This is the very promising beginning of **Ticket to Ride** by Janet Neel (\$24.95, Minotaur/St. Martin's), which proves to be a much more serious and realistic thriller than you might expect. The two ladies in question are great supporting characters in an up-to-the-minute plot about people-smuggling in Great Britain. Young solicitor Jules Carlisle's firm specializes in immigration, but Jules herself does not. In the absence of her boss on a holiday weekend, she gets drawn into a case involving Bosnian Serbs, lettuce farming, MI5 and murder. Janet Neel is the pseudonym of Baroness (Janet) Cohen, a Labor Party member in the House of Lords, with a long career in the British civil service. Neel previously wrote an excellent series featuring British civil servant Francesca Wilson. *Ticket to Ride* stands alone, but if we're lucky it may become the first in a new series.

Who knew? Peat bogs are ancient phenomena with the perfect conditions for preserving human remains. Erin Hart has written a couple of critically acclaimed mysteries centered around "bog bodies," which are usually centuries-old archaeological finds. In **Lake of Sorrows** (\$7.99, Pocket), a body is found in an Irish peat bog, but this body is wearing a wrist watch. Nora Gavin, an American pathologist working in Ireland, and her on-again, off-again romantic interest, archaeologist Cormac Maguire, investigate. As in her critically acclaimed first novel, **Haunted Ground** (\$7.50, Pocket), Hart gives us beautifully described Irish landscapes, folklore, songs, and spooky atmosphere - and only a few, highly clinical glimpses of the forensic procedures.



Here's an inspired set-up for an amateur detective: twenty-something Natasha Blake is an orphaned genealogist in Great Britain. In **Pale as the Dead** by Fiona Mountain (\$6.99, Signet), Natasha tries to trace a missing girl who had posed in a photograph resembling a famous pre-Raphaelite painting. Unfortunately, the pre-Raphaelites' morbid sentimentality casts a certain pall over the whole proceeding, which can best be described as moody. In the more lively sequel, **Bloodline** (\$23.95, St. Martin's), Natasha is hired by a wealthy amateur genealogist to trace the family tree of his daughter's fiance - which turns out to include a murderer.

Someone once observed that there are Austenites and there are Jane-ites. I guess I fall somewhere in between. A true Austenite would never countenance a Jane Austen mystery. But I'm in awe of Stephanie Barron's ability to write in Austen's voice in her "Jane" mysteries (**Jane and the Unpleasantness at Scargrave Manor**, et al., \$6.99, Bantam). So I was willing to take a chance on Carrie Bebris' mysteries featuring Mr. and Mrs. Darcy, beginning with **Pride and Prescience** (\$6.99, Forge), set immediately after the close of its near-namesake. I caught up with the sequel, **Suspense and Sensibility** (\$6.99, Forge), when the Darcys take charge of Elizabeth's younger sister Kitty for her first London season. It becomes clear early on that the plot has a supernatural element, which means that the eminently grounded and sensible Elizabeth Bennett has gone woo-woo on us. If that doesn't discourage you, then you would probably greatly enjoy these well-constructed trifles. Fitzwilliam and Elizabeth banter like the Nick and Nora of the nineteenth century, and Bebris skillfully combines the Darcys with the Dashwoods from the original S&S. Bebris' latest is **North by Northanger** (\$22.95, Forge).

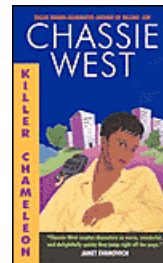


#### Briefly Noted:

Susan Conant, Harvard Ed.D, dog fancier, and author of sixteen "Dog Lovers' Mysteries," is branching out. **Scratch the Surface** (\$22.95, Berkley Prime Crime) is the first "Cat Lovers' Mystery," featuring mystery writer Felicity Pride and a fabulous pair of Chartreux cats named Edith and Brigitte. Conant merrily sends up feline fiction (think Rita Mae Brown and Lillian Jackson Braun), as well as the book business in general. In fact, the only fully serious parts of the book are those told from the point of view of the cats. Conant has also teamed up with a (human) co-author, her daughter Jessica Conant-Park, to produce **Steamed** (\$22.95, Berkley), a new mystery about a twenty-something foodie known on the Internet as "Gourmet Girl."



If you think that Susan Conant has gone to the dogs by turning to cats, then you might want to check out **Bark M for Murder**, comprising four novellas by J.A. Jance, Virginia Lanier, Chassie West, and Lee Charles Kelley (\$6.99, Avon), all of them canine-oriented. The late Virginia Lanier wrote a fresh and feisty series about a woman bloodhound trainer. Chassie West has a series about a former D.C. cop, African American Leigh Ann Warren: **Killing Kin**, **Killer Riches**, and **Killer Chameleon** (all \$6.99, Harper).



#### Now in Paper:

**Murder in Clichy** (\$12, Soho) by Cara Black, reviewed in **MBW #1**. Latest in the *tres hip* Aimee Leduc series is **Murder in Montmartre** (\$23, Soho Press).



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## Octavia Butler 1947-2006

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

A visionary, and one who always looked at the complexity of oppression in the human condition, Butler's vengeance for social justice was manifest in all of her work, from *Kindred* (250,000 copies in print) through her *Parable* tales and, most recently, *Fledgling*. Tall, black, lesbian, dyslexic, a self-proclaimed recluse, and a consummate storyteller, she once described herself as "a pessimist, a feminist always, a Black, a quiet egoist, a former Baptist, and an oil-and-water combination of ambition, laziness, insecurity, certainty, and drive." As readers, we simply knew her to be brilliant.

She was the first (and still the only) science fiction writer to receive a MacArthur genius grant. Her other awards include science fiction's biggest award, the Nebula, for *Parable of the Talents*, as well as Nebula short story awards for "Speech Sounds" and "Bloodchild", and a lifetime-achievement award from PEN-America. We already miss the books she didn't get a chance to write; we will be rereading her for the rest of our lives.

Check the WBAI archives for an interview with Octavia Butler:  
[www.wbai.org/index.php?option=content&task=view&id=8485&Itemid=42](http://www.wbai.org/index.php?option=content&task=view&id=8485&Itemid=42)

For Ann Christophersen's review of *Fledgling*:  
[www.btwof.com/enews\\_extras/Images2MBW/2MBW.html#TofC3](http://www.btwof.com/enews_extras/Images2MBW/2MBW.html#TofC3)

## Writing Wanted

First person essays for an anthology to explore women's journeys to our "homelands" be they specific geographic locations, imagined communities, part of one's identity/body or memory. Tentatively titled *Homelands: Women's Journeys Toward Meanings of Home* and edited by Patricia Justine Tumang and Jenessa de Rivera, it will be published by Seal Press. Deadline is April 1. For more info email [homelandanthology@gmail.com](mailto:homelandanthology@gmail.com).

## Global Feminism

Spinifex reports that their world-wide bestseller, Betty McLellan's *Help! I'm Living with a ~~Man~~ Boy* has been translated into Slovenian, for a total of 14 translations for the title.



I hope you've enjoyed this issue of **More Books for Women**.

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And, of course, we'd love to know what you think about **More Books for Women**.

Yours in spreading women's words,

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