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- [PDF of this issue](#)
- [Printable List of books reviewed in this issue](#)

In This Issue...

- [For the Kids....1](#)
- [Ann Christophersen....2](#)
- [Linda Bubon....4](#)
- [Pam Harcourt....5](#)
- [Tish Hayes....7](#)
- [Mysteries....9](#)



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 Women & Children First, and friends.

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The Lesbian Edition

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

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Advocate Books

The publisher of
[Katharine Hepburn: The Untold Story](#)
 by James Robert Parish

A rigorous examination of the iconic star's enigmatic life revealing the real, sometimes conflicted, frustratingly complicated, and always amazing woman behind the painstakingly self-crafted persona. Includes new revelations about her numerous intimate relationships with women.

More Books for Women

— December 2005 —
Volume 1 Number 3

Dear Readers,

Booksellers have no time to write book reviews in December, so I flew to Chicago and asked Women and Children First staffers what books they're recommending for the gift-giving season. It seemed a useful question and turned up a number of books that would be wonderful gifts for friends, family, coworkers, and colleagues — or for yourself.

The brilliance, insight, and commentary are theirs; typos and transcription errors are mine.

Enjoy!

Carol Seajay
 Publisher
 Books To Watch Out For

P.S. If you want the quick and easy shopping experience, just click through and order the books you want from Women & Children First, have them delivered to your door, and your shopping is done. Or, if you live in Chicago, you can opt to pick them up at the store.

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For the Kids

Linda Bubon Recommends:

All three of these books can be enjoyed by children from 3 to 10, really! Robert Sabuda, the current master of paper engineering, offers one of his most enchanting pop-ups, **Winter's Tale**. Sparkly white landscapes abound with deer, squirrels, owls, and other winter woodland creatures. The text is simple and poetic, and there's a twinkling surprise at the end. Little Simon, \$26.95.



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The Gay Men's Edition

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

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Canada.



Can You See What I See? Night Before Christmas is one of Walter Wick's "I Spy" books with picture puzzles to search and solve. The beauty of this as a holiday book is that 3-year-old cousins can look at it with 8-year-olds (or gramps) and have equal advantage spying "A snowshoe, a fence, a shovel, an ax, 2 mittens, a skate, wild turkey tracks...." And the Clement Moore poem is printed on the end papers. Scholastic, \$13.99.

What would a mean old factory owner named Scroogemacher say when his workers want to leave a little early to celebrate Hanukkah?

Hanukkah, Shmanukkah! This retelling of the Dickens classic by Esme Raji Codell and illustrated by LeUyen Pham is full of personality, great storytelling, and a delightful sprinkling of Yiddish (and there's a glossary). Thoroughly entertaining, I'm hoping I get a chance to read this aloud for some group this holiday. Hyperion, \$16.99, cloth.

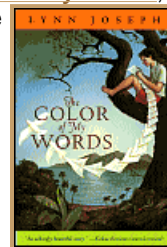


Tish Hayes Recommends:



Jazz A B Z: An A to Z Collection of Jazz Portraits, by Wynton Marsalis and illustrated by Paul Rogers, is my new favorite children's book. It looks like a record in a sleeve and is arranged like an ABC book, with a poem about a jazz artist and an illustration on each page. It starts with Louie Armstrong, Count Basie is next, and the reader quickly discovers that all of the poems are in a different form, and they're stunning, as are the illustrations. Support materials in the back include biographical sketches of each musician as well as a section that explains all of the poetic forms. Jazz-loving parents with jazz-loving children will love this book as would anyone with a sense of delight who wants to learn more about jazz. Candlewick Press, \$24.99 hardcover. The publisher says it's for grades 4-8.

Another book I love for the 3rd to 6th graders is **The Color of My Words**, by Lynn Joseph. It's about a 12-year-old girl who lives in the Dominican Republic and wants to be a writer. She writes and writes but her writing terrifies her family and her neighbors who fear it could get her killed and they tell her to stop. But her writing has purpose: when a strange sea monster scares away tourists (and the town's income) she writes a mythology about it that brings the tourists back and saves the day financially. Later, when the government wants to bulldoze the town, her words help rally the townspeople to stand up against the tanks. But when her brother is killed she decides that, because her words didn't save him, they're worthless and she stops writing. But, in the end, her mother and father and the people who were so convinced that her writing would destroy her, encourage her to find her words to celebrate her brother's life and as well as her own life. It's a beautiful story with a lot of information about the Dominican Republic and some great politics. Harper Trophy, \$5.99.



[back to top](#)

Ann Christophersen recommends...

Gift Books

Fearless Women: Midlife Portraits (by Nancy Alspaugh and Marilyn Kentz, photography by Mary Ann Halpin) would make a great gift. I find that, like many women in my generation, I'm more and more interested in midlife issues, but this is also a great gift for younger women looking into their own futures. As you can see, the cover photo is of a woman in an elegant, satiny dress but holding a sword in a very powerful position over her head, and she has a martial arts-like expression on her face. The sword functions as the leitmotiv for the portraits and it's very interesting to see the variety of ways that women hold it. Each woman's portrait is accompanied by a photograph at a younger age,



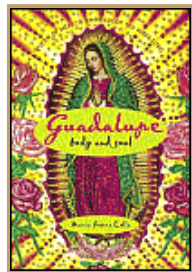
a bit of text about what she remembers being like, and a longer piece about what the then-young woman went on to do in her life. And each woman responds to a question or two, such as “What do you love most about being in the middle of your life?” “What is changed about your self perception since you were a young woman?” or “If you could go back and speak to your younger self, what piece of wisdom would you share?” The content of each piece is unique, but they combine to make quite a portrait of midlife women. And the price is very reasonable: Stewart, Tabori and Chang, \$27.50 cloth.



A Day in the Life of the American Woman: How We See Ourselves, by Sharon Wohlmut, Carol Saline, and Dawn Sheggeby (the team who put together *Sisters* and *Mothers & Daughters*) and fifty women photographers. This one is more impressive photographically than the first two, and all the photographs are by the world's leading women photographers, so you get a look at contemporary women's photography as well as the theme. One thing

I like about this book is its enormous diversity: women from all sorts of communities and ethnic groups are presented — and it also presents a really diverse range of what the women actually *do* in their lives. Spreads include short biographies of the women portrayed, their situation, and something about who the women are as people as well as their photographs. And they're doing everything you can think of: from building their own houses to taking in foster children, to surfing, to minding the border patrol, to starting and running businesses, to skateboarding with their daughters, and feeding the farm animals. The photos are great and the collection offers a very kaleidoscopic, fulsome presentation of women in contemporary life. Bulfinch, \$35.00 and worth every penny.

Queens: Portraits of Black Women and Their Fabulous Hair, by photographer Michael Cunningham and George Alexander is a cool book. It's a sequel, of sorts, to *Crowns: Portraits of Black Women in Church Hats*, which was published a few years ago. The elegant black and white photographs are accompanied by first person narratives about... hair. The hairdos are great — they range from a woman who has no hair and how she feels about having lost her hair, to the fanciest possible contraptions on the top of women's heads. It's all very artfully done and there's a wonderful richness of diversity in these photographs. They're not all fancy, by any means, but they're all pretty darn interesting. There's a lot of pride and pleasure manifest in these photographs. There's also a lot of politics to hair, and the choices these women make are pretty carefully thought out. Doubleday, \$29.95 cloth.



We've sold more copies of Marie-Pierre Colle's **Guadalupe: Body and Soul** than any art book in recent years. It's a stunning book and offers a range of images and representations of Guadalupe from all over Mexico and South America, from statuary to street parades and tattoos. The text discusses why she's so important, her role as the patron saint of the downtrodden and oppressed, and her many manifestations. And it is only \$24.95 in hardcover — it's a wonderfully extravagant art book for those on a budget. Published by Vendome.

Just for the fun of it: **Living Artists**, an exploration of three dimensional art, comes with these hip little 3-D glasses you have to wear to see the art. It's all amazing and fun. Compiled by Ivy Sundel, Crow Woods Press, oversized \$28.50.

Circle Stories is a catalog of paintings from Riva Lehrer's show at the Chicago Cultural Center. She's a great artist and these are wonderful portraits of people in a variety of fields — the arts, academia, and political activism — each of whom has a significant physical disability and an interest in exploring body issues in her or his own work. Lehrer's self portrait reflects her experience of spina bifida. The book is gorgeous. It's an amazing collection; the vision she brings to the work is a real gift. One of the very striking paintings is of Eli Clare, the author of *Exile and Pride: Disability, Queerness and Liberation*. **Gescheidle**, \$20 paperback.

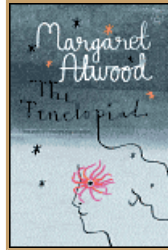
To see some of the paintings: www.rivalehrer.com.

Diana Souhami, who wrote the biographies *Gluck, Gertrude and Alice, The Trials of Radclyffe Hall*, and *Mrs. Keppel and Her Daughter*, has a new book out called **Wild Girls: Paris, Sappho and Art — The Lives and Loves of Natalie Barney and Romaine Brooks**. She's a great biographer and fine writer, and there hasn't been anything published about Natalie Barney and Romaine Brooks for a number of years so I expect there will be a lot of lesbian interest in this book. Romaine Brooks is a well known artist, so I think it will also have a broader readership. St. Martin's Press, \$29.95.



I think Anne Fadiman's *The Spirit Catches You and You Fall Down* is one of the greatest books ever written. She's the editor of *American Scholar* and her writing is elegant and exudes such a sense of respect and awe for language. Her new book, **Rereadings: Seventeen Writers Revisit Books They Love**, reflects her deep appreciation for the importance of stories and the human experience of reading and telling them. Part of the joy of reading it is that the contributors are writing about *why* they love these books. Think Vivian Gornick on reading Colette, Allegra Goodman on Jane Austen, Patricia Hampl on Katharine Mansfield, Barbara Sjöholm on *The Snow Queen*.... Then imagine curling up in the living room on a winter night under a cozy throw or reading it on the back porch in the summer. Pick it up when you have only a little time but want some deep satisfaction. It would be a great gift, too. Farrar, Straus and Giroux, \$22 cloth.

A Short History of Myth by Karen Armstrong (*The Spiral Staircase*, et al.) would make a terrific holiday present. If you're thinking of a really good friend, go for the companion volumes, **The Penelopiad**, Margaret Atwood's retelling of the myth of Penelope and Odysseus from *The Odyssey* and **Weight**, Jeanette Winterson's retelling of the myth of Atlas and Heracles. Atwood, you can probably already guess, has a much different take on the story than Homer had. They're all short books — about 150 pages, \$18 each in cloth.



They're all great, but I'd recommend starting with **A Short History of Myth**, because its really a great boon to have Armstrong's understanding of myth at the ready when you begin the others. She writes about the significance of myth, its features and its development over time, and the purpose myth serves in contemporary times. This book is so tightly constructed; every single sentence says something that you'll want to think about at length; it's so rich you'll want to read it multiple times and, because it's short, you can.

It really got me thinking about myth again and the purpose of myth. Armstrong sees a close relationship between myth and science because the imagination is the source of both. She posits that myth is essential to understanding our lives in contemporary times and that we neglect myth at our peril. It's an amazing book. It's so great to have such great storytellers (re)telling these stories. And these are just the first three books in the series. Canongate, \$18 each, cloth, about 150 pages.



[back to top](#)

Linda Bubon suggests...

If you haven't heard the Kitchen Sisters (Davia Nelson & Nikki Silva) on NPR, you may well have heard one of their stories from "Lost & Found Sound." As oral historians, their gift is pulling great stories out of people, and the stories in their stylishly illustrated new book and their beautifully orchestrated CD, **Hidden Kitchens**, will make you laugh, cry, and think. This is a book about community-building and the sharing of food. It includes stories about the homeless, the hungry, the eccentric, and the delightful and is a great book for anyone who loves cooking and social activism. Rodale \$27.50 cloth; \$19.95 CD.



Studs Terkel, the premier oral historian (to whom the Kitchen Sisters dedicate their book), is now 94, and he's just published a book of interviews with all kinds of musicians. **And They All Sang** gives you the voices of myriad performers, from classical divas to blues belters, and covers most of the 20th century. But what is even more remarkable is the theme that comes across through all these voices: the joy of the artist when music transcends the limits of the body and reaches into the realm of the spirit, connecting artist with audience. New Press, \$25.95.



For bibliophiles of all ages, Maureen Corrigan's **Leave Me Alone I'm Reading** is a real treat. Corrigan grew up, like me, in a working-class family with a mom who thought she'd ruin her eyes with all that reading. Her memories of the happy hours spent with books, her cogent feminist analysis of the female "extreme adventure novel," and her wonderful lists of books worth reading make this a book to refer to again and again. Random House, \$24.95.

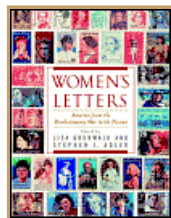
Eudora Welty: A Biography. Eudora Welty has been one of my favorite writers since high school, and I knew that she was very private about her life and didn't intend for an authorized biography to be published until after her death. Suzanne Marrs, an English professor in Jackson, Mississippi, was close to Welty for the last two decades of her life and has written an affectionate, sometimes surprising, thorough, and engaging biography that will, hopefully, put to rest the false image of Welty as a homebody spinster and "regional" writer. The Welty who emerges here is sophisticated, extremely social, politically astute, and complex. Harcourt, \$28.00.

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[back to top](#)

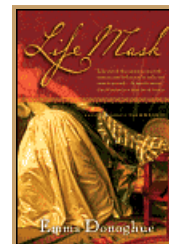
Pam Harcourt raves (and rants)

Leah Hager Cohen's **Without Apology: Girls, Women, and the Desire to Fight** is kind of a stealth feminist book. I'd give it to any boxing fans you happen to have in your family, to anyone who loved the movie *Million Dollar Baby*, and to anyone interested in women and sports, women's body issues, or in those challenging questions about women and aggression. Cohen comes to the subject with pretty rational ideas about boxing — getting hit in the head is bad, boxing is exploitation, etc., but her body contradicts her. She wants to spar and to fully express her own aggression in the "safe" space of the ring. Her writing is clean and engrossing as she explores these contradictions in her own life and in the lives of the young women boxers and one extraordinary woman trainer that she meets along the way. I read this just before seeing *Million Dollar Baby* and it really resonated. If you're still thinking about the character in the movie or the awesome girl fight, this is for you.

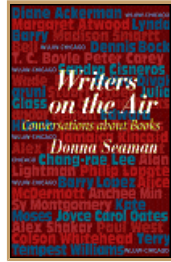


Women's Letters: America from the Revolutionary War to the Present (see MBW #1) is another stealth feminist gift. Reading women's letters is a great way to learn about women's history, and it's a great gift for both feminists and women who don't identify as feminists, as well as for teens with U.S. History classes. Edited by Lisa Grunwald and Stephen J. Adler, Dial Press, 824 pages, \$35.

Life Mask is pretty new in paperback and a good gift for anyone who likes historical fiction. I don't usually read historical fiction, but I've read a couple of Emma Donoghue's earlier books and now I'll read anything that she writes — even a 630 page historical novel set in Old England. And it's fantastic! It revolves around this woman sculptor and her circle of friends, while the Whigs and the Tories are fighting it out, and the French revolution is exciting and scaring everyone. The people are demanding new rights. And in the midst of it all there's this self-made woman actor trying to make a life for herself and, in what's a more minor but



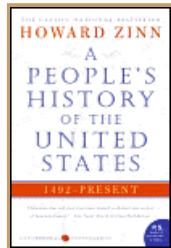
still important thread, the sculptor is trying to sort out what she feels for the women in her life. Donoghue is an Irish writer who has also lived in England and Canada. She's an historian, as well, and most of this book, including the lesbian subplot, is all based on actual events and historical documents. Harcourt, \$14.00.



Donna Seaman interviews writers for WLUV, one of our local radio stations and some of her best interviews are collected in **Writers on the Air: Conversations About Books**. The conversations are more about the writing than about the writers as celebrities, so it would make a wonderful gift for people who love the work that these writers do. It includes interviews with writers our readers know and love — Diane Ackerman, Margaret Atwood, Sandra Cisneros, Chitra Divakaruni, Jamaica Kincaid, Alice McDermott — as well as writers they'll want to check out after reading their interviews. The Linda Barry interview was particularly fabulous — and funny. Peter Dry Books, \$24.95.

Directed by Desire: The Collected Poems of June Jordan

Jordan gathers the work from her ten books of poetry as well as work that hasn't been previously published, including work from just before her death from breast cancer. It's a fantastic gift for poetry people, for activists, for anyone who wants to benefit from this poet's clear eye for injustice of all kinds, and for anyone who collects the important works of women of color. It's *the* June Jordan book to have. Edited by Jan Heller, with an introduction by Adrienne Rich. 650 pages, Copper Canyon Press, \$40 cloth.

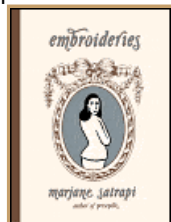


Sometimes you want to give a gift that will push people a bit, politically, and yet you still want to be welcome at future family gatherings.... **A People's History of the United States: 1492 to Present** would fill that bill because it's a collection of oral histories. You can argue with someone's politics, but this is a collection of people saying, "This is what happened to me," and then the reader gets to think about it. But, given that Howard Zinn picked them out, the experiences recalled won't be the ones you see on Fox TV.... It's a fascinating collection looking at such things as slavery, the struggles against racial segregation, the struggles to stop the war in Vietnam..... It would also be a good gift for someone in high school that you want to think about things. They can flip through the book, find something they're interested in or that they're studying in school that will give them a wider perspective than what they're getting in school. Harper Perennial Modern Classics, 770 pages, \$18.95 paper.

Graphic Novels: Everything You Need to Know is a huge new book about graphic novels. It would be great for anyone who's already into graphic novels, as well as for anyone who's curious about them and wondering where to start. Teenagers, especially artists, would love it. Basically it takes you through some of the best graphic novels, classics like *Persepolis*. It's a great introduction to this newly recognized literary form. By Paul Gravett, Collins, \$24.95, oversized paperback.



Another great graphic-lit gift would be the new boxed set of **Persepolis** and **Persepolis 2**, Marjane Satrapi's autobiographical graphic novels about growing up in Iran during the revolution (**P**) and her teenage years and teenage isolation (**P2**). They're both really heartbreaking and funny, and both present a beautiful marriage of text and pictures. In her later book,



Embroideries, she uses full-page illustrations to present a gathering in which the women in her family and their friends spend an afternoon talking about, well, sex, and their relationships and life. It's hard to imagine sitting in on that kind of conversation here, as a teenager or young woman. When Satrapi was here, she addressed that, a bit, and talked about how much more uptight and shame-based people here are about things like sex and smoking and everything that has some pleasure or some danger. In our

culture we're super focused on the danger; there you don't need a prescription to buy birth control, it's just understood that some adults will want it and since they're adults, they'll go get it. She's awesome. **P** and **P2** would be great gifts for teens, anyone willing to make the leap into this new literary form, and anyone who's interested in women's stories. \$18 each or \$23.90 for the slip-covered set. *Embroideries* is \$16.95, all from Pantheon.

We recently expanded our crafts section because so many young women are taking up crafting — it's kind of an anti-consumer thing that focuses on the pleasure of actually making something. **Bazaar Bizarre: Not Your Granny's Crafts!** has lots of cool non-traditional designs like skulls, directions for knitting them, and the like. No traditional mitten projects here! By Greg Der Ananian, Studio, \$16.95 272 pages, paper.

But any arty knitter will love **The Art of Knitting: Inspirational Stitches, Textures, and Surfaces**, a gorgeous and sensual art book with close up pictures of lots of yarn textures. Perfect for those people who go into a yarn shop and touch everything and don't want to leave. By Françoise Tellier Lamagne, published by Hudson at \$39.95.

Katherine V. Forrest's new anthology, **Lesbian Pulp Fiction**, has a wonderfully scandalous cover. Subtitled *The Sexually Intrepid World of Lesbian Paperback Novels, 1950 – 1965*, it features excerpts from novels by Ann Bannon, Vin Packer, Paula Christian, Valerie Taylor, and others that we've stocked. People grab these books for the clean hard-boiled writing, the excitement of seeing this kind of writing from women, and, of course, because it's fun to read about the scandalous, forbidden tales of the 50s and early 60s. Cleis Press, 400+ pages, \$18.95 paperback.



What do I give to my guy friends?

I give guys books by women, because a lot of guys won't read women if the books aren't literally given to them. I've given **Persepolis** to a lot of guys, and Kelly Link's **Magic for Beginners** to guys I know who are into fantasy. (I give her first book of short stories, **Stranger Things Happen**, to everyone.) Last year I gave one of my guy friends Michelle Tea's biography, **Chelsea Whistle**, because I think that if you can get them to read a woman writing about her life that's a really good thing. The graphic novels, and **Without Apology**, of course, and, if they're writers, Donna Seaman's book, because I think it's always good for them to read a collection that includes women equally.

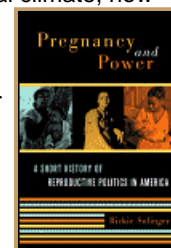


[back to top](#)

Tish Hayes recommends.....

For poetry lovers I'd recommend Anne Carson's **Decreation**. She's known for her lyrical writing and everything I've read by her has been beautiful, inspiring, and really interesting. This, her newest collection, includes new poetry, essays and even an opera. Check out her wonderfully poetic novels, too. Knopf, \$24.95.

For the activists on your list, especially in the current political climate, how about **Pregnancy And Power: A Short History of Reproductive Politics in America** by Rickie Solinger? I just read *Undivided Rights: Women of Color Organizing for Reproductive Justice* (South End Press, \$20 paperback) for our Young Feminist Reading Group, so I'm thinking a lot about the aspects of reproductive rights that rarely get mainstream media attention: the times when "population control" is just an euphemism for genocide, the rights for women who want to keep their babies when the government is actively convincing them not to, the need for broader childcare and child support systems, access to health care for all, as well as access to safe, affordable abortion. In **Pregnancy And Power** Rickie Solinger gives us a history of the movement that includes all of these issues.



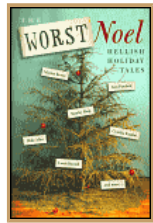
Anyone interested in politics on a broad level would do well to read it. NYU Press, \$27.95.

For people who love the music of the 50s and 70s: **Dream Boogie: The Triumph of Sam Cooke** is rich with detail about the musician's astounding life and is compellingly written by Peter Guralnick. Little Brown, \$27.95.



For the foodies: **Mangoes & Curry Leaves: Culinary Travels Through the Great Subcontinent**, by Jeffrey Alford and Naomi Duguid, is *the* Indian cookbook this year. The photography is stunning and it's a wonderful mix of travel tales, cultural history, food and cooking history, as well as being an incredibly comprehensive cookbook. Some of the recipes are really complex and some are quite easy. Artisan, 400+ pages, \$45 cloth.

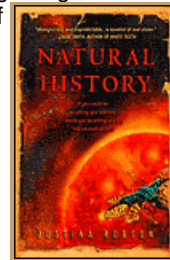
Woody Guthrie was also an artist — he went to California to make his living in the art world. **Woody Guthrie Art Works** by Steven Brower and Nora Guthrie is a comprehensive collection of his sketches, posters and other art that he created along the way, interspersed with commentary and some of Guthrie's own writings. It's fascinating to look at someone who's so important musically and politically and be able to see another aspect of his artistic creativity. Rizzoli \$45.00.



The holidays can be pretty awful and sometimes people need a little something to help them get through: **The Worst Noel: Hellish Holiday Tales** collects tales from a bunch of great writers, including Ann Patchett and Cynthia Kaplan, to make you laugh, help you survive, and realize that crazy families and disasters are the nature of the season. It's a great antidote to holiday saccharin. Harper Collins, \$14.95 hardcover.

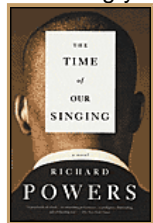
A.L. Kennedy is one of my favorite writers. Her fiction is dark and complex, her prose stark and beautiful. She treats her characters with equal parts tenderness and brutality, allowing them to find redemption in the most unlikely places. She has a unique ability to find the darkest part of the human heart and write about it so compellingly that you embrace it, grow to love her dark characters, and feel almost complicit with their deeds. Check out her new short story collection, **Indelible Acts** (Vintage, \$12.00). Her most recent novel is *Paradise*, but *Original Bliss* is also a good place to start reading her novels.

British writer Justina Robson's **Natural History** would be a great gift for science fiction buffs. Zadie Smith calls Robson "a novelist of real vision" and I have to agree. She starts with future where human-machine hybrids do the work, where an aircraft is actually a human being with a brain and with a nervous system in a mechanical structure. These humans want their freedom but the "unforged" humans, however willing, aren't sure how to give it to them. It's rich with interesting, unexpected twists. Her writing is really beautiful; if there's any fault at all it's that she has so many ideas that I wish this book were 200 pages longer to explore them all in more depth. Bantam/Spectra, 336 pages, \$13.00. Her new novel is **Silver Screen**, from Pyr, \$15 paper.



Two novels by men:

Ian McEwan **Atonement** starts on the eve of World War II when a young girl, who is angry at her sister, witnesses an odd incident and then invents an explanation for it that turns out to be erroneous but that still has ramifications: a young man is shipped off to war and his life, her sister's life, and her own, are forever changed. There's a twist at the end that changes everything and elevates this novel from merely very good to great. Anchor, \$14.95.



The Time of Our Singing, by Richard Powers, is the story of an interracial couple who meet and fall in love (and later marry) at Marian Anderson's famous concert on the Washington Mall. Together they see a future beyond race for their children and vow to bring this dream to life with their love and music which, of course,

proves impossible. The result is an eloquent and painful exploration of race, music, and time. Picador, \$16.00.

And a few good reads for lesbian friends:

The fantastic new Alison Bechdel, ***Invasion of the Dykes to Watch Out For***, would be one of my number one recommendations! Alyson, \$14.95.

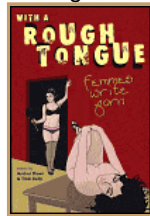


Half the staff has read and loved Emma Donoghue's ***Life Mask***. She's a brilliant writer, with a great sense of story. *Life Mask* offers an interesting look at lesbian life, such as it was, in the 18th century, and at life in the theater back then. It's all really fascinating. Harcourt, \$14.00.

Lauren Sanders' ***With or Without You***, although not quite as literary as *Life Mask*, is an excellent read but with a little more love and drama. Akashic Books, \$14.95.

For the Kate Clinton fans — or for people with short attention spans who want something thoughtful but fun to read: ***What the L*** would be a perfect gift. It's full of short punchy pieces and good politics. Clinton is a funny lady and has a lot to say. Carroll & Graf, \$14.95.

For anyone into music and what's going on with queer music these days: ***HomoCore: The Loud and Raucous Rise of Queer Rock***, by David Ciminelli and Ken Knox, is the first serious look at the whole Homocore scene: the bands, past and present, punk and rock, and people who are queer and loud about it. Some of the women it includes are Kaia Wilson, Gina Young, Three Dollar Bill, Amy Ray, and the Butchies. It's a really exciting book. Alyson Publications, \$15.95 paper.



For a little fun with lesbian erotica consider ***With a Rough Tongue: Femmes Write Porn***. It would be a great present just for the cover which is such a relief from all the look-alike cheesy covers on most lesbian erotica collections. And it has a pretty impressive collection of contributors: Diana Cage, Daphne Gottlieb, Amber Dawn, Anna Camilleri, Nalo Hopkinson, Suki Lee. Arsenal Pulp Press, \$16.95.

And here's another great novel: I'll just borrow Pam's rave to tell you about Carla Trujillo's novel: "***What Night Brings*** is about a 12-year-old funny wise survivor. Marci Cruz likes other girls. She has an abusive father and a church that seems less and less applicable to her life. Reminiscent of *Bastard Out of Carolina*, this book gives us another great young heroine dealing with large questions that only get larger and more complex the more questions she asks." Curbstone Press, \$15.95.

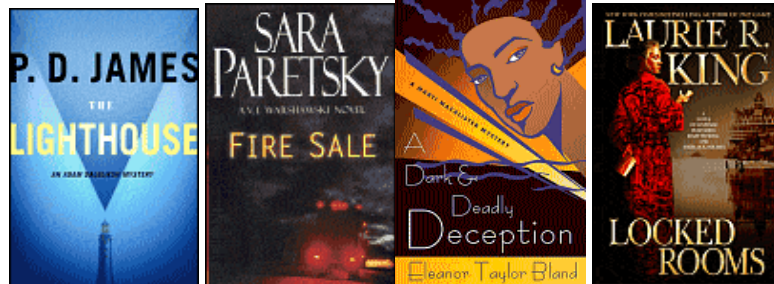
[back to top](#)



[back to top](#)

Mysteries

By Nan Cinnater



It is not always easy to choose mysteries as gifts — the tastes of mystery lovers are wide and varied. However, there are a few classic authors with new entries this season whose books should satisfy almost anyone known to be a fan of the genre.

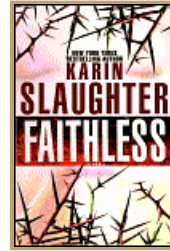
Anyone who likes British mysteries — or indeed fine literature — will be happy with the new novel by P.D. James, ***The Lighthouse*** (\$25.95, Knopf).

James introduced her refined, poetry-writing detective, Adam Dagleish of Scotland Yard, over forty years ago, and he's still one of the most intriguing characters in mystery fiction. Here Commander Dalgliesh and his team investigate a murder on Coombe Island, an exclusive retreat.

In the Eighties, Sara Paretsky and Sue Grafton revolutionized the genre by featuring smart, tough private investigators who happened to be women. Both are still at the top of their game, writing with juice and vigor. Grafton's latest is **S is for Silence** (\$26.95, Putnam). Paretsky's **Fire Sale** was reviewed by Ann Christopherson in the premiere issue of *More Books for Women* (see [MBW #1](#)) (\$25.95, Putnam). Give these to anyone who reads private eye novels — and don't forget the men on your list!

Veteran African American author Eleanor Taylor Bland has a new entry in her well-crafted police procedural series about middle-aged Midwestern cop Marti McAlister, **A Dark and Deadly Deception** (\$23.95, St. Martin's/Minotaur). Marti and her longstanding partner take on a case involving secrets, fears and the tension between rich and poor in Lincoln Prairie, IL.

Many mystery readers became fans of all things forensic because of Patricia Cornwell, but some feel that her series jumped the shark several books back. For true believers, there's **Predator**, Cornwell's latest about medical examiner Kay Scarpetta (\$26.95, Putnam). If you have any doubts about Cornwell, though, try **Faithless** by Karin Slaughter (\$25, Delacorte), an ingenious and gripping thriller featuring Georgia medical examiner Sara Linton. (How do you know if your giftee has a taste for this stuff? If she watches *CSI* or *Bones* on TV, that's a clue.)



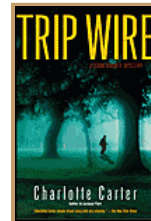
Sherlockians are a gift-giver's challenge because they come in two distinct tribes: those who love absolutely anything that has to do with Holmes, and those who despise any deviations from the "canon," the original stories by Arthur Conan Doyle. Almost everyone agrees, however, that Laurie R. King's Mary Russell novels are the best Sherlock Holmes pastiches since *The Seven Percent Solution*, and King's latest, **Locked Rooms** (\$24.00, Bantam), is one of her best yet. Here Holmes and Russell travel by ocean liner to San Francisco, where Holmes helps Russell unlock childhood memories about the famous earthquake and fire (and he teams up with one very famous real-life detective).

Stocking Stuffers (a.k.a. Paperbacks)

For the price of a paperback, take a chance on one of these lesser known but extremely interesting mysteries.

For those who love convoluted historical conspiracies a la *The Da Vinci Code*, there's **The Conquest** by Yxta Maya Murray (\$12.95, Rayo). A Latina rare book restorer uncovers the story of a sixteenth-century Aztec woman who plotted to assassinate Cortes, the Holy Roman Emperor, and the Pope!

Jackson Park and **Trip Wire** by Charlotte Carter (both \$12.95, One World/Ballantine) feature African American Cassandra Lisle and her great aunt and uncle in surprisingly dark, twisted mysteries set in Chicago in 1968, giving a new slant on Sixties politics, black power, and the generation gap.



Jane Austen meets Errol Flynn in **Point of Honour** by Madeleine E. Robins, introducing sword-wielding Sarah Tolerance, private agent of inquiry in London circa 1810 (\$6.99, Tor). This could appeal to lovers of historical fiction, fantasy, and mystery, but — trust me — you've never read anything like it!



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

If you like it, please tell all your friends and colleagues about **More Books for Women** (and our sister publications, **The Lesbian Edition** and **The Gay Men's Edition**) and encourage them to subscribe as well. If you give holiday gifts, and can give some subscriptions to **More Books for Women** as a way to spread the word about it and to help us launch it far and wide, that would be a wonderful way to support this new publication. But if you don't like it, or have suggestions for improvement, please tell us before you tell your friends. If you *really* like it, and would like to join 50 women in making monthly pledges (\$100-\$25) for a year to help finance its first year, please call or email Maddy@BooksToWatchOutFor.com or give me a call.

We look forward to hearing from you about this exciting new publication.

Yours in spreading the words,

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