



The Lesbian Edition

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Great new books are blooming all over lately - it took a lot of effort for me to stop reading long enough to write reviews! From prize-winning literary fiction to engaging Friday Night Reads, from trips back in time to edgy, of-the-moment anthologies, we hope you enjoy the variety. We also have a few more picks from authors for their favorite books of 2006.

In this issue we honor the memory of longtime LGBT civil rights activist Barbara Gittings, who also worked with the American Library Association for many years championing LGBT literature. And speaking of our literature, we hope you enjoyed BTWOF's [special supplemental issue](#) which listed the recently announced Lambda Literary Award nominees.

On to the reading,

Suzanne Corson
Books To Watch Out For



Books

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Lambda Literary Foundation's First Writers Retreat

On August 5-12 in the Bel Air Hills area of Los Angeles, 21 emerging LGBT writers will meet for the first Lambda Literary Foundation Writers Retreat. These writers will be immersed in the craft of writing, led by faculty members Dorothy Allison, Fenton Johnson, Eloise Klein Healy, and Katherine V. Forrest. Visiting faculty this year include John Rechy, Michael Nava, and Bernard Cooper. Emerging LGBT writers (fiction, nonfiction, poetry) of any age are welcome to apply for this opportunity; some publication history is preferred but not required. Katherine V. Forrest says, "The aim is pretty lofty - to give hands-on assistance to our next generation of GLBT writers, and hopefully, when they come out of the week, they'll have a colleague group going forward, something most of us isolated old ink-stained wretches never had." Applications and scholarship requests must be postmarked by April 15, 2007. For details about the application procedure, check out www.lambdaliterary.org/retreat/home.html.



About BTWOF

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

The Lesbian Edition

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

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The Gay Men's Edition

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

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Lesbian Publishing News

After thirty years, **New Victoria Publishers** founders Beth Dingman and Claudia McKay have sold their company to Patricia Feuerhaken of Chicago. Patricia, a lifelong reader and writer who worked for twenty-five years in the telecommunications industry, responded to their ad in *Lesbian Connection* and, after working out details of the sale, has moved everything up to Chicago. Beth and Claudia continue to assist her with the transition, for which Patricia is grateful. She looks forward to revitalizing the press and says, "I'm pretty much going to keep it the way it was - I want to publish books women love to read." The first two titles are scheduled for Fall 2007 publication. She is also actively accepting manuscripts, and interested individuals can contact her at queries@newvictoria.com. Though the website url will remain the same (www.newvictoria.com), there is a new mailing address: PO Box 13173, Chicago, IL 60613. Beth and Claudia are "pleased that New Victoria will continue to provide excellent lesbian fiction and nonfiction to the community" with Patricia's new energy and enthusiasm.

To read about the history of New Victoria Publishers, see this 2002 article from Vermont's *Out in the Mountains*: www.mountainpridemedia.org/oitm/issues/2002/09sep2002/fea01_communityprofile.htm

In another lesbian publishing house change, **Intaglio Publications** publisher Kathy L. Smith has sold her three-year-old company to Sheri Payton and her partner Becky Arbogast. Sheri Payton previously worked with Intaglio as author liaison and general manager while Becky Arbogast has worked for both Naiad Press and Bella Books. Sheri, who writes under the pen name of Robin Alexander and has three titles with Intaglio, will manage the daily operations of the newly reorganized press. Becky will continue her full-time duties with Bella Books and Bella Distribution while assisting Sheri with the re-launch of Intaglio.

The first two publications under the new Intaglio banner are *A Nice Clean Murder*, book two in the Kate Ryan Series, by Kate Sweeney and *Compensation*, a novel by S. Anne Gardner. The new press currently has 25 authors under contract and plans to publish 12 books in 2007 and 18 in 2008. They plan to continue publishing the same kinds of

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More Books for Women covers the finest in thinking women's reading, plus mysteries, non-sexist children's books, and news from women's publishing. Written by the owners and staff at Women & Children First, and friends.

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

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

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



Ad Rates

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Canada.

romance, science fiction, mystery, and other lesbian fiction that Intaglio has in the past, and they are accepting manuscripts (see www.intagliopub.com/submissions.htm for more information).

Kathy Smith noted, "With Sheri's knowledge of Intaglio Publications and its family of authors and Becky's wealth of experience in the lesbian publishing business, Intaglio Publications will, without a doubt, continue to have a bright and prosperous future."



More Favorite Books from 2006

Additional authors have shared their favorites with us. Enjoy!

Elana Dykewomon

Likely this is on the top of every dyke list: Alison Bechdel's *Fun Home: A Family Tragicomic*. For a comix fan like me, its mix of painstaking graphics and literate allusion was paradise between covers. But since everyone is going to sing its praises, how about some of the less obvious?

Best reprints of 2006: Djuna Barnes's *Nightwood* (the first lesbian novel I read at 14 - deep, dank, mysterious, appropriately tortured for its time, and brilliant) and Sarah Schulman's *Empathy*, in a wonderful new edition from Arsenal Pulp Press in Vancouver. Go for sexy depth!

Favorite poetry anthology of 2006: *What I Want From You - Voices of East Bay Lesbian Poets*, ed. by Linda Zeiser and Trena Machado. Full disclosure: I wrote the Foreword. But the variety, edginess, and energy of the dykes where I live still knocks me out. Check it out: www.rawartpress.com.

And, although they are not books, a plug for our journals: *Sinister Wisdom* (how great that it survives as an independent publisher of a wide range of activist perspectives on how our communities take shape, along with literature and art), *Harrington Lesbian Literary Quarterly*, *Bridges - A Jewish Feminist Journal*, and *Bitch* (the last two have mixed-orientation contributors). And of course - *Books to Watch Out For!*

Elana Dykewomon is close to finishing her new novel, Risk. Look for it in 2008 and check out her classes and editing services at www.dykewomon.org.



Katherine V. Forrest

I enjoyed Katia Noyes's debut fiction Lammy Finalist of last year, *Crashing America*. If this edgy novel is an example of what our emerging lesbian writers are producing, we're in very good shape indeed. Another highlight was catching up with an old friend's new series, Claire McNab's humorous mysteries featuring Kylie Kendall, the Aussie Outback maverick who's landed at a detective agency in the wilds of L.A. I liked the first two books a lot (*The Kookaburra Gambit* and *Wombat Strategy*) and found *The Quokka Question* so laugh-out-loud funny that I'm saving the new *The Dingo Dilemma* for when I really need it.

My book of the year without a doubt is Alison Bechdel's graphic memoir, *Fun Home*. It's been a joy to watch this unique, wonderful book garner national reviews and unanimous praise - and what a shock of delight it was to open my end-of-the-year *Time* and see it named their number one book of the year! I read the book just as it came out, before I knew anything about it or saw a single review, and I will never forget the experience of not only sharing Alison's journey of discovery but understanding with growing excitement that I was holding in my hands a beautifully realized, groundbreaking work of art. A highlight of 2006 was watching wonderful success happen to one of our community's most deserving, most treasured spirits.

Katherine V. Forrest is twice winner of the Lambda Literary Award for best mystery and has been honored with the Pioneer Award from the Lambda Literary Foundation. Senior fiction editor at Naiad Press from 1984 to 1994, she teaches classes and seminars on the craft of writing.

Lori L. Lake

Counterfeit World by Judith K. Parker knocked my socks off and made me wish for a sequel. Equal parts mystery and military science fiction, the book is set on a unique world and is peopled with promising characters. I hope to see more of this world. A whole series would be great.

Freedom's Sisters, the third book in Naomi Kritzer's Dead Rivers Trilogy finished the exciting and engrossing story begun in *Freedom's Gate* and *Freedom's Apprentice*. This mainstream author isn't afraid to mention characters of varying sexual orientations, and the main character's sexuality is left up in the air, which makes me hope for another trilogy with the same character finding true love. (With a woman. <grin>)

I absolutely loved the latest Elizabeth Moon space opera, *Engaging the Enemy*, which is the third in the Kylara Vatta series after *Trading in Danger* and *Marque & Reprisal*. I look forward to the fourth book, *Command Decision*, which came out in late February. Moon writes strong female characters, and while they're not lesbian, they're entertaining and gutsy and fun.

In the art of nonfiction, I truly loved Heather Sellers's *Page by Page: Discover the Confidence & Passion You Need to Start Writing & Keep Writing (No Matter What)*. Now the same author has a new one, just out, which I look forward to reading: *Chapter After Chapter: Discover the Dedication & Focus You Need to Write the Book of Your Dreams*. I devour writing books and have read a lot of them, and *Page by Page* is a keeper. The author has a delightful voice and is full of wonderful advice and ideas.

Lastly, I was wowed in the mystery realm by two books: Rose Beecham's mystery/thriller *Grave Silence*, and Nevada Barr's *Hard Truth*. The latter takes forest ranger Anna Pigeon into new and uncharted territories and includes a tough-minded, determined major character in a wheelchair who won my heart over. I didn't read many mysteries or romances in 2006, but these two mysteries were the sweetest mystery reads of the year.

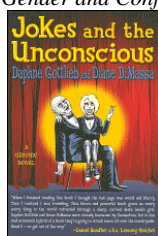
Lori L. Lake, the author of six novels, a book of short stories, and editor of two anthologies, is a 2007 recipient of the Alice B. Reader's Appreciation Medal. Her latest book, Snow Moon Rising, is a novel of survival, faith, and love set during WWII. Lori teaches queer fiction writing at The Loft Literary Center in Minneapolis and is currently at work on her seventh novel. You can visit her website at www.lorillake.com.





Katia Noyes

Let me disclose that my three new favorites are books by three new friends: *Nobody Passes: Rejecting the Rules of Gender and Conformity* (edited by Mattilda a.k.a. Matt Bernstein Sycamore, Seal Press); *Jokes and the Unconscious* (by Daphne Gottlieb and Diane DiMassa, Cleis Press); *Rose of No Man's Land* (by Michelle Tea, MacAdam/Cage).



Mattilda's fiery anthology uses revolutionary thought to illuminate the uncategorizable. Daphne's graphic novel offers a tender dance between the mortal and the carnal. And Michelle's latest is about teenage transformation through hallucinatory lust. What more could you ask? Yum, yum, and yum.

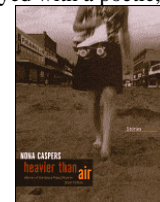
Katia Noyes's second novel *A Partial History of My Delusions is under construction*; her first novel (*Crashing America*, Alyson Books 2005) was blessed with four award nominations, as well as being chosen as a *Book Sense Notable*.



Find of the Issue: Fiction

"My brain likes to go everywhere," Nona Caspers says in an online work [profile](#), "but I tend to focus on narrative offerings: fiction, memoir, creative nonfiction. I love the aesthetics of Dailyness." This dailyness, relayed with a poetic, frank, and deceptively simple voice, runs all through **Heavier Than Air**, her collection of short stories. The winner of the Grace Paley Prize in Short Fiction, *Heavier Than Air* contains eleven stories, some connected by their setting (farms in Minnesota) and background characters, some with explicit lesbian content and others without. This is the book I couldn't put down last month; I read it - twice - in one sitting.

In "Country Girls," fourteen-year-old Nora moves from urban Saint Cloud, Minnesota to rural Melrose (where the author is from) and becomes attached to Cynthia, the "cowgirl" next door. She remembers:



"The woman in the picture was once my friend - that is why my father sent the magazine - and for a moment I felt transported against my will back to my parents' home, the air too thin, the rooms too small, me pacing the short hallway from my bedroom to the living room window, and I felt a wave of the deepest longing I had ever known, a longing too large for the body, almost cartoonish unless you are the one living it, and you are fourteen, and then it is deathly serious."

"Wide Like an Eagle's Wings" tells the story of Manny, a young girl in Catholic school who is obsessed with Senator Kennedy's race for the presidency. In "The EE Cry," Frank moves on with his life after his wife leaves him for another woman. Deborah, a medical student in San Francisco, sits with her mother in her dying aunt's hospital room in "Vegetative States" and then asks her mom to come visit her in San Francisco after her lover leaves her in "Mother." Schoolmates bond over religious fervor in "Stigmata." From the young and inquisitive to the elderly looking back, each story is full of introspection, wonder, exploration, and emotion.

My favorite is probably "Alfalfa," about longtime friends Ruthie and Margaret on the eve of Ruthie's pregnancy-hastened wedding to John. It's a heart-wrenching story, beautifully told. Ruthie has always been in love with Margaret, and even after Ruthie starts dating John, she can't imagine a life without Margaret. John's a good guy and is always happy to include Margaret on their outings. Things do change, though, and Ruthie feels resigned.

"Ruthie thinks sex with John will be hard but isn't. It's as easy as stripping a field, she tells Margaret. When John is inside her Ruthie closes her eyes and pulls his hipbones close. She waits for the heat to reach her heart, the way it does when she's with Margaret, but John never goes that deep."

Ouch. And yeah. Good stuff. So even if you "don't do short stories," give this collection a try. It's worth it. University of Massachusetts Press, \$24.95, 9781558495562.

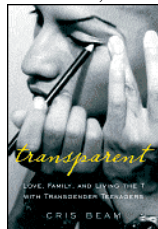
An article about the author from her hometown paper:

www.albanyenterprise.com/articles/2007/02/02/melrose_beacon/news/caspers.txt.



Find of the Issue: Nonfiction

Cris Beam, a freelance writer, accompanied her grad-student partner, Robin, on a move from New York to Los Angeles.



Once in town, Cris decided to volunteer at an L.A. high school for LGBT youth called the Eagles. Her two and a half years teaching there resulted in ongoing involvement and research into the lives of trans youth on the street, which she recounts in **Transparent: Love, Family, and Living the T with Transgender Teenagers**.

This book captivated me, from her own personal story as a lesbian interacting with (mostly) male-to-female transgender teens to the stories of those kids. She includes some trans history, looks at regional differences between places like L.A., San Francisco, and New York, and discusses the reasons that there is so much more social service funding for MTFs than there is for FTMs (to simplify one big reason, MTFs do more sex work, so there is a readily identifiable HIV risk; there is funding available to reduce HIV risks).

When Cris first connected with Eagles (Emphasizing Adolescent Gay Lesbian Education Services), she found that it wasn't as much a full-fledged high school as it was a continuation school for kids who had been hassled in regular high school. A high percentage of these kids were "boys who looked too girlie or girls who looked too butch," many of whom considered themselves transgender. Some kids attended more or less regularly while others dropped in and out. After leaving, Cris would run into some of these kids on the streets, and she began interviewing them about their lives.

Eventually she and her partner grew so close to one of the kids, they acted as de facto guardians for her.

At first I was disappointed that there wasn't more about FTM youth in *Transparent*, and felt misled by the subtitle. I automatically think "testosterone" when I read something like "the T"; here in the San Francisco Bay Area, where the FTMs are quite visible, thank you very much, starting "T" is a significant transition point for many transmen. But in *Transparent*, the kids Cris encounters in L.A. use "T" to mean everything from "transgender" to "the truth." And it may have been more accurate to have the subtitle read "Transgender Girls" instead of "Transgender Teenagers." The author *does* address the absence of FTM subjects in her book, giving both "official" reasons why there are more homeless adolescent transgirls than transboys in L.A. ("clinical estimates say that transwomen outnumber the men by three to one") as well as her own thoughts on the subject:

"My experience is that parents are more likely to throw out a 'son' to fend for himself when he's embarrassed the family by dressing like a girl. They won't, however, throw out a daughter when she dresses like a boy. Part of this is sexism - it's fine for daughters to want to be men, but for sons to be women? Unthinkable."

An arguable point, perhaps, but this book is also not meant to be exhaustive research - in many ways, it is as much the author's story as it is the kids she interviews.

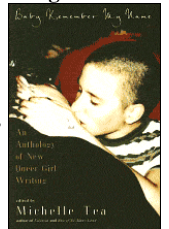
And that's part of what kept me hooked - reading about Cris's reaction to the kids she encounters and about her and Robin's personal experience with Eduardo/Christina. And the spirit of the kids shines through as well. I especially enjoyed meeting Foxx, who acts as a mentor for younger transgirls: "Our flair is where we keep our power," she posits.

Cris Beam's writing is engaging, almost poetic at times - when she discusses the phenomenon of trans kids from all over the country flocking to either coast, she writes, "The coasts are where the people live, right at the boundaries of where we cannot." I very much agree with the sentiment of Rachel Simmons, author of *Odd Girl Out*, who wrote, "An unprecedented window into the lives of transgender teens, *Transparent* is a testament to the resilience of young adults trying to find themselves in a world that would prefer them lost. I couldn't put it down." Harcourt, \$15, 9780151011964.

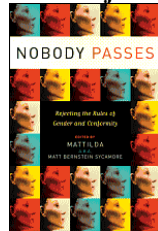


Anthologies

Michelle Tea (*Rose of No Man's Land*, *Rent Girl*, *Valencia*, et al) has provided a glimpse into the future of queer literature with her new anthology **Baby Remember My Name: An Anthology of New Queer Girl Writing**. We will definitely be reading more from the twenty-two authors, now in their teens and twenties, collected here. In memoir, graphic novel excerpts, and fiction, they write about road trips, relationships, race, sex, drugs, growing up, roommates, sex work, families of origin, gender, and, uh, pigeons. Favorites of mine include "Homo Marriage Redux" by Zoe Whittal, "Laundry Day" by Robin Akimbo, and "Stay" by Beth Steidle. Overall, *Baby Remember My Name* is a fine showcase for these fresh, original, and exciting voices. Carroll & Graf, \$14.95, 9780786717927.



Mattilda, a.k.a. Matt Bernstein Sycamore, has also collected an eclectic variety of writers in **Nobody Passes: Rejecting the Rules of Gender and Conformity**. Mattilda wanted pieces that "explor(e) and



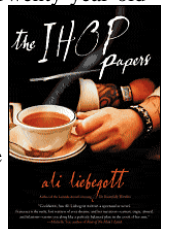
critiqu(e) the various systems of power seen (or not seen) in the act of passing...in the broadest possible sense - passing as the 'right' gender, race, class, sexuality, age, ability, body type, health status, ethnicity - or as a member of the coolest religion, political party, social/educational institution, exercise trend, fashion cult, or sexual practice." The pieces by writers as varied as Roxanne Dunbar-Ortiz and Jen Cross do fulfill Mattilda's vision. But perhaps most interesting is her introduction, in which Mattilda discusses how this anthology came to be: Seal Press editor Brooke Warner saw an interview with Mattilda in *Bitch* magazine about a previous anthology (*That's Revolting: Queer Strategies for Resisting Assimilation*) and contacted Mattilda about publishing with Seal. Resulting conversations, recounted in the intro, discussed everything from how broad or narrow to focus this anthology to Mattilda's own gender identity. A decidedly feminist collection with much food for thought. Seal Press, \$15.95, 9781580051842.



Fiction

The IHOP Papers is the follow up to Ali Liebegott's Lambda Literary Award-winning *The Beautifully Worthless*, and it ably glides over the infamous sophomore slump that often affects writers of acclaimed first novels. Twenty-year-old Francesca is in love with Hope from TV's *Days of Our Lives*, her AA sponsor, Maria, and Irene, one of her professors. Francesca follows Irene to San Francisco, where Irene is spending her sabbatical with her two lovers, Jenny and Gustavo. When things get tense between Gustavo and Jenny, Francesca decides to get her own apartment:

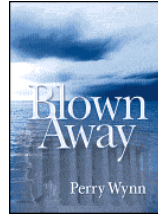
"Why was the water so green? I turned the faucet on to see if it was really the water or just the reflection from the fluorescent ceiling lamp. The water from the faucet was clear. There was nothing to reflect green in the bathroom. Then I saw the lines of white and green boric acid around the edges of the tub. The roach detergent. I was soaking in it."



Francesca works at the local International House of Pancakes. Her observations of the customers and the people she encounters commuting to and from work give her a fast and intense education about people as well as material for her writing. In addition to work, Francesca concentrates on staying sober, wonders when she's going to lose her virginity, crushes out on lots of different women, pines after Irene, and cuts herself to ease the tension of it all.

"There were five bloody (razors) in my wallet when the police picked me up. I didn't know how to explain the difference between self-mutilation and suicide attempts to law-enforcement agents. Police see bloody razors and they don't believe you're using it as a way to impress girls."

Francesca isn't - except when she is - your usual 20-year-old Bay Area baby dyke. She soberly navigates through her heartbreaks and openings with a realistic mix of bewilderment and keen insight. One of my favorite lines comes when she discusses a customer who ate buckwheat pancakes and read Tai Chi books. After he cautions her not to cook rice while listening to rock music, Francesca wonders, "Who are these freaks - and if they were so concerned with right livelihood and health, what were they doing eating at IHOP?" I just loved the character of Francesca in all her coming-of-age glory and think you will, too. Carroll & Graf, \$14.95, 9780786717941.



One of the most surprising books plot-wise I read this month was **Blown Away** by Perry Wynn. Far-right politicians and LGBT-rights advocates make unlikely bedfellows when a territory in Florida is set aside for homosexuals. Any folks who live in this territory are governed by LGBT people, receive full civil rights, and live as the majority; queer people outside the territory are not afforded much legal protection. Much thought-provoking content in this speculative-fiction thriller, about separatism, government, civil rights, and sociopolitical alliances. Though there is ugliness in *Blown Away* - conspiracies, terrorism, intense hatred - it's quite a trip to read about a state with an openly lesbian governor and all queer statehouse. Harrington Park Press/Alice Street Editions, \$19.95 paperback, 9781560236078.

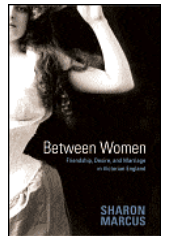
Back in Print

My Blue Heaven, a play by Jane Chambers (*Last Summer at Bluefish Cove*) is again available, this time from TnT Classic Books. For more details, check out www.tntclassicbooks.com/janechambersworks.html.



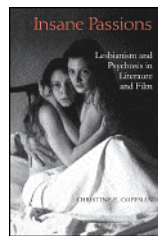
Queer Women's Studies

Sharon Marcus uses contemporary Queer Theory, Women's Studies, literature analysis, and Victorian women's "lifewriting" (both published and unpublished diaries, correspondence, biographies, memoirs) to look at women's relationships from 1830-1880 in **Between Women: Friendship, Desire, and Marriage in Victorian England**.



"Scholars of autobiography concentrate on a handful of works by exceptional women, and historians of gender and sexuality have drawn primarily on fiction, parliamentary reports, journalism, legal cases, and medical and scientific discourse, which emphasize disruption, disorder, scandal, infractions, and pathology. Lifewriting, by contrast, emphasized ordinariness, and typicality, which is precisely what makes it a unique source for scholarship."

She also argues that looking at lifewriting helps show how women write about different friends in different ways, allowing for interpretation about the multiple kinds of relationships women have with each other. But she also looks at more conventionally-used source material, including recent scholarship like Martha Vicinus's *Intimate Friends*. Novels she examines include *Great Expectations* (Dickens) with its treatment of women's relationships and Trollope's *Can You Forgive Her?* for its look at marriage. A bit heady for a casual read, **Between Women** is an interesting addition to the queer studies shelves. Princeton University Press, \$19.95 paper, 9780691128351.

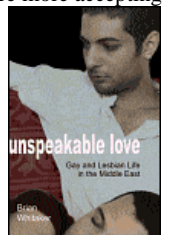


Also new is Christine E. Coffman's **Insane Passions: Lesbianism and Psychosis in Literature and Film**, in which the author looks at early twentieth century treatments of lesbianism by Jacques Lacan and others and links them to a number of films later in the century that revisit similar themes (*Basic Instinct*, *Single White Female*, and the film closest to Lacan's essay on the 1933 "Papin Affair," *Sister My Sister*). Coffman also considers novels by Djuna Barnes and H.D. in this interdisciplinary work. Wesleyan University Press, \$49.95, 9780819568199.



More Nonfiction

In **Unspeakable Love: Gay and Lesbian Life in the Middle East**, Brian Whitaker convincingly argues that any change in the rights of queer people in the Middle East must be part of broader reforms, linked with other political, social, religious, and cultural issues. It was interesting to learn that life for same-sex-loving folks in this part of the world wasn't always so fraught with danger. In the eighteenth century, for instance, Arab countries were more accepting of homosexual activity than their European neighbors. In the present day, most of the author's face-to-face interviews took place in Egypt and Lebanon, so more emphasis is placed on those countries, and, as might be expected, there is more information on gay men than lesbians, though he does address this imbalance. And as has been found in other parts of the world as well, the relative invisibility of lesbians in the Middle East offers some protection from the persecution that gay men often face. But it's small comfort for women who truly identify as lesbian, as opposed to those who are married to men and have sexual relationships with women on the side. The author includes the observations of Iman al-Ghafari from Syria about this:



"Amid feminist discussions around sex as power, there emerged an assertion of lesbianism as a political choice,

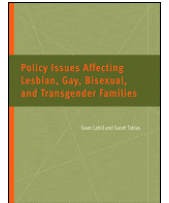
a means of escaping relationships as decided and controlled by men.... In fact, the feminist discourse that turns lesbianism into a political choice is not liberating. Instead it puts ('inborn') lesbians in a troublesome position where they have to play a major role in fulfilling the desires and fantasies of some heterosexual feminists at the expense of their true lesbian desires."

The author also discusses the amount of female same-sex activity in Middle Eastern fiction and argues that the only book that can be viewed as a truly lesbian novel in Arabic is *Ana Hiya Anti (I Am You)* by Elham Mansour, which looks at a lesbian trying to assert her true identity in Arab society. Whitaker also notes the impact of the Internet, and how some countries, such as Saudi Arabia, heavily censor the sites its citizens can visit, so the web's not as available as a lifeline for queer folk there as it has been in other areas. All in all, an interesting read. University of California Press, \$19.95 paper, 9780520250178.



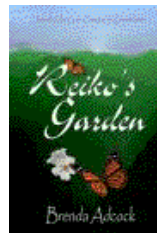
Andrew Koppelman, professor of law at Northwestern University School of Law, takes a broader view of the issue of state-sanctioned same-sex marriage in **Same Sex, Different States: When Same-Sex Marriages Cross State Lines**. He looks at the debates about marriage and what happens when laws in different states conflict and concludes that both sides of the debate - pro- and anti- same-sex marriage - are often legally wrong. Koppelman clearly introduces the concept of choice of law to the lay reader, a set of already existing legal doctrines which direct courts about what actions to take when the laws of one state are in opposition to another state's. He also argues for a Federalist solution, where consistency and fairness should prevail. Yale University Press, \$35, 9780300113402.

Legal and other issues are also at the core of **Policy Issues Affecting Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual, and Transgender Families** by Sean Cahill and Sarah Tobias. Cahill and Tobias discuss social service funding, legal protections - and barriers, different types of family structures, domestic violence, elder issues, and the many policies affecting children in a very readable text with supporting charts and graphs. The extensive bibliography will be invaluable for anyone working in or interested in these topics. University of Michigan Press, \$19.95 paper, 9780472030613.



Historical Fiction

Lori L. Lake may be best known for uber-Xena-like mysteries such as *Gun Shy*, but she should gain a whole new following with her latest book, **Snow Moon Rising**. Spanning from World War I through the dismantling of the Berlin Wall, *Snow Moon Rising* follows Mischka Gallo and her Roma family (more commonly - and derisively - known as gypsies) from Poland in 1918 to New York City in 1989. Near the end of WWI, Mischka's family adopts Emil, an AWOL German soldier, and Mischka later becomes close to his sister, Pippi. The paths of Mischka and Pippi cross again during WWII in a concentration camp. A bit reminiscent of Linda Kay Silva's *Tory's Tuesday* though broader in scope, *Snow Moon Rising* brings the traditions and tragedies of the Roma to life as well as provides a look at their struggles as immigrants in the United States. The author has done her homework, and her use of flashback, symbolism, and sociopolitical observation serve this engaging novel well. Regal Crest, \$20.95 paperback, 9781932300505.



World War II plays a role in Brenda Adcock's **Reiko's Garden** as well. In 1949, fresh from his tour of duty in Japan, Thomas Sanders returned to his rural home in Eastern Tennessee with Reiko, his Japanese bride, and their infant son. Ten-year-old neighbor Callie Owen observes the ostracization this family receives and is curious about why it's happening - and about her different-looking neighbor. Reiko and Callie strike up a supportive friendship that sees them through the racism Reiko experiences and the homophobia Callie deals with when she grows up. When Reiko dies and Callie returns to Tennessee with her partner and their children for the funeral, the past comes roaring back to Callie and with it, questions about her family of origin. Regal Crest, \$15.95, 9781932300772.



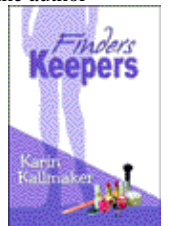
Friday Night Reads

Karin Kallmaker always provides a *there* there in her romances; she brings the worlds of a diverse group of women to life in her books, be they the owners of wineries (*Just Like That*), bakers (*Sugar*), or musicians (*Maybe Next Time, Paperback Romance*). In her latest, **Finders Keepers**, we meet Marissa Chabot, the owner of an online dating service, so we get to learn about how these kinds of services match folks up. Interesting, that. And I love how the author describes the audience at one of Marissa's presentations:

"The crowd filling the meeting room was thoroughly mixed, with over-fifties and under-thirties, skin colors ranging from ebony to hothouse mushroom and hair styles screaming 'het soccer mom' and 'baby butch.'"

There *is* the inevitable ironic commentary about a woman running a dating service being unhappily single herself, but fear not - girl does get girl.

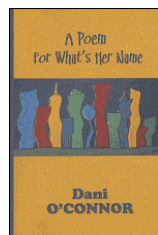
In addition to being a successful business owner, Marissa is also someone who struggles with her body image and weight. Unlike many romance heroines, those who seem to be physical perfection personified, Marissa probably looks like many of those who will read about her - someone who is attractive, though not in an *L Word*-lesbian sort of way,



and one who is not always happy with her body. During the course of the book, we witness and learn from Marissa's journey - from hating her body and the limitations it has (tested when a cruise ship she's on sinks) to a life-changing meeting with a nutritionist who teaches her (and us) about the intersections between our bodies, aging, exercise, and eating. As someone who has run the gamut from body hatred in her twenties, through self-acceptance and fat liberation in her thirties, to new physical challenges in her forties, I had sometimes conflicting emotions about Marissa's character, but I did appreciate much of what Helena, the nutritionist, had to say:

"It wasn't until I accepted that fitness and meal planning were a reasonable use of my time - not just reasonable but justifiable and vital - that I had success. So think about that for a moment. We can train ourselves to plug in our cell phones, take the car in for oil changes, moisturize our skin, brush our teeth every day, absorb the news important to our lives and jobs. These things take time but they're necessary to maintaining our lives. So when is the last time you allowed time to maintain your body?"

Linda, the object of Marissa's affections, also has a difficult journey to travel, one that is artfully concealed until the end of the book, so no spoilers here. Suffice to say that Karin Kallmaker continues her tradition of strong character portraits, interesting and informative plots, and engaging storytelling with *Finders Keepers*. Bella Books, \$13.95, 9781594930720.



Speaking of online dating, a sarcastic Internet profile leads to a match in Dani O'Connor's **A Poem for What's Her Name**. This is a short, sweet, romantic, seemingly semi-autobiographical story of Doc, a cynical college professor who has pretty much given up on finding love and pours her frustration out into her profile:

"Educated MTV addict with a penchant for bad fashion and dull conversation seeks overly attractive, high maintenance, money grubbing, curious, "straight" woman for bad dates and awkward kisses.... I like long walks through airports and singing in public restrooms.... Normal, intelligent, funny, fit, attractive women need not apply; you don't exist. I might as well date the Easter Bunny."

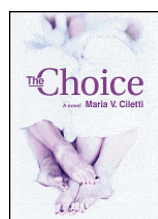
Several entertainingly-bad dates later, she receives a response from someone calling herself the Easter Bunny, and their clever, amusing, long-distance courtship begins. *A Poem for What's Her Name* is both the story of the building of a relationship and a look at how achieving one's dreams in one area can lead to positive movement in other areas. Spinsters Ink, \$14.95, 9781883523787.

Radclyffe is a writer who doesn't disappoint. **When Dreams Tremble** brings Leslie, a high-power Manhattan attorney, back to her upstate New York family home where she runs into Devon, her best friend in high school. Painful memories of the other from that time haunt them both, and meeting again forces them to confront their past. Leslie's family owns a small lakeside vacation business, and Devon is an environmental biologist, so the lake and surrounding environs play prominent roles in the story as do Leslie's parents. The near-book's-end meeting between Natalie, a sergeant with the Forest Service, and Jules, the local sheriff, smoothly lays the groundwork for a sequel. Perhaps there is an upstate New York equivalent of Radclyffe's Provincetown series in the offing. Bold Strokes Books, \$15.95, 9781933110646.



Shelter from the Storm is another going-home-again story, this time by Peggy J. Herring. Nora Fleming heads back to the homestead for her mother's 75th birthday and decides to stay, leaving behind both her career and her girlfriend in Dallas. Once home, she helps her mom with her farm, reconnecting with her brother and cousins in the process. Eventually she runs into Darcy Tate, her high school sweetheart. Old passions are rekindled amidst painful memories, and then Nora's girlfriend comes to visit. Dyke drama, family dynamics, farm antics, small town idiosyncrasies (donkey basketball?), and even an ultimately amusing little subplot about marijuana make *Shelter from the Storm* an entertaining read. Bella Books, \$13.95, 9781594930676.

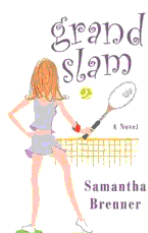
Paula Offutt's **Butch Girls Can Fix Anything** was quite fun. Kelly Walker is the local fix-it butch, whose business keeps her busy after the death of her lover. Her good friends and neighbors Kaye and Annette lease one of their rental houses to Grace Owens, mother to nine-year-old Lucy. Rental units often need fixing you know, as do broken hearts... As I said, this book was fun, with wonderful characters, including several dykes who are wheelchair users - all too rare in fiction. *Butch Girls Can Fix Anything* is the kind of story that clearly illustrates the concept of "family of friends," and it's lovely. My only beef is with the title - most butches I know would take great exception to being referred to as "butch girls." But it's a small beef about an otherwise entertaining story. Regal Crest, \$16.95, 9781932300741.



A nursing home is the setting for **The Choice** by Maria V. Ciletti. Mina Thomas is married to a police officer, loves her job, and is fairly happy with her life. Then she is assigned to mentor Regan Martin, a new nurse. Both heterosexually inclined until meeting, they are startled to find themselves drawn to each other. Will Mina give up her comfortable life for this never-before-felt passion? Truthfully, I found the background tales of their work at the nursing home more compelling than their love story - there are great moments with some of the patients and their families. The husband's character was realistically drawn, and the ending was not the one you'd expect, so that was refreshing, though some readers might find it disappointing. At times I felt like I was in product-placement hell, though, with many brand names unnecessarily strewn about, so that was annoying. Nevertheless, I'm sure this story will resonate with women whose life it mirrors. Harrington Park Press/Alice Street Editions, \$16.95, 9781560236382.

Girlfriends From Hell

When will we learn to listen to our friends? Erin Fox, in **Voices of the Heart** by Frankie J. Jones, had been warned - Ashley was trouble. But Erin's heart and hormones got in the way and before she knew it, she was falling hard for a woman who not only already had a girlfriend, but whose girlfriend was a police officer. But even Erin's friends didn't know the whole story until Erin's life was turned upside down. Fortunately Diana, Erin's new neighbor, provided a comforting shoulder to cry on, and Erin's parents were supportive as well. Frankie Jones, whose *Survival of Love* included a character battling breast cancer (see our review in [TLE #5](#)), again brings a tough issue to light, this time mental illness. Bella Books, \$13.95, 9781594930683.



Attorney-turned-realtor Stephanie Alexander deals with not one, but two girlfriends from hell in Samantha Brenner's **Grand Slam**. This dishy, humorous novel follows Stephanie's nine months on the women's tennis tour, initially as the friend of Conchita Martinez's coach, then as the girlfriend of former number-one player Sydney Foster, and finally, as the girlfriend of Sydney's ex, Casey Matthews. When Stephanie's with Sydney, it spins that old U-Haul joke on its ear; Sydney's on hyperdrive. Eventually Stephanie bonds with Casey over Sydney's possessiveness, and sparks fly between them. But Casey has her own baggage... Dyke drama can be amusing all on its own, but dyke drama combined with women's tennis? Much fun. Kedzie Press, \$16.95, 9781934087428.



Books To Watch Out For

Houghton Mifflin, publishers of Alison Bechdel's *Fun Home*, will also publish her second graphic memoir, *Love Life: A Case Study*. In announcing the deal, *Publishers Weekly* said *Love Life* "will examine the author's love life against the backdrop of her complex childhood."

Yale University Press will be publishing Janet Malcolm's *Two Lives: Gertrude and Alice*, "a nuanced account of the legendary couple's relationship, with emphasis on their mysterious survival during World War II; paired with a reading of Stein's modernist masterpiece, *The Making of Americans*." For a sneak preview, see "Strangers in Paradise: How Gertrude Stein and Alice B. Toklas got to Heaven" by Malcolm from the *New Yorker*: www.newyorker.com/fact/content/articles/061113fa_fact1.



Barbara Gittings, 1932-2007

Longtime gay rights activist Barbara Gittings died at 75, after battling breast cancer for seven years. Founder of the first East Coast chapter of the Daughters of Bilitis in 1958, she met her partner of 46 years, Kay Tobin Lahusen, at a DOB picnic. Barbara Gittings will be remembered for her courageous participation in early public gay rights demonstrations, such as walks in front of both the White House and Philadelphia's Independence Hall (see photo in *Philadelphia Inquirer* obit, linked to below), as well as her work with the American Psychiatric Association in removing homosexuality from its list of mental disorders. But she also contributed to lesbian literature, first as editor of the DOB publication *The Ladder* from 1963-1966. Under her tenure there, with the help of her partner, the words "A Lesbian Review" were added to the title, and the cover began featuring photographs of lesbians. Gittings also served on the American Library Association's Gay Task Force for 15 years and helped compile their LGBT bibliography. (As you'll see below in the Awards section, the ALA's LGBT fiction award is named for her.) She also assisted with her partner's book, *The Gay Crusaders*, published in 1973. The lesbian and gay book collection at the Philadelphia Free Library was named in her honor. "She will live forever in our hearts and our memory. In the history of LGBT people, she will stand forever among our giants," observed Katherine V. Forrest, president of the Lambda Literary Foundation. In the *Philadelphia Gay News*, her partner said, "Barbara left behind a legacy of love. Love for the cause, for all the workers in the cause, for justice, for her community, for music, and for me." Donations in her memory can be made to Lambda Legal Defense and Education Fund, 120 Wall Street, Suite 1500, New York, NY 10005-3905, www.lambdalegal.org. *Philadelphia Inquirer* obituary: www.philly.com/mld/inquirer/news/local/states/pennsylvania/counties/philadelphia_county/philadelphia/16736722.htm. *Philadelphia Gay News* obituary: www.pridesource.com/article.shtml?article=23620. More recent photos: www.bettyslist.com/photo-of-the-week.php?a=2431.



Lesbian Literature Online

Minnesota Women's Press profiled Ellen Hart: www.womenspress.com/main.asp?SectionID=1&SubSectionID=1&ArticleID=2598.

Lynne Jamneck interviewed Karen X. Tulchinsky for L-Word.com: <http://literature.l-word.com/content/view/145/43>.

Nerve.com interviewed Alison Bechdel:
www.nerve.com/screeningroom/books/interview_alisonbechdel.

Camille Paglia has resumed her weekly columns on Salon.com after a six-year hiatus:
www.salon.com/opinion/paglia/2007/02/14/return/index.html.

Southern Voice interviews Kate Clinton:
www.sovo.com/print.cfm?content_id=6469.

And finally, financial guru and author Suze Orman comes out in an interview with the *New York Times Magazine*:
www.nytimes.com/2007/02/25/magazine/25wwlnq4.t.html?_r=1&oref=slogin.

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Awards

2007 ALA Stonewall Book Awards

The GLBT Roundtable of the American Library Association has announced the 2007 Stonewall Book Awards and this year's honor books:

Barbara Gittings Literature Award: Andrew Holleran, *Grief* (Hyperion)

Israel Fishman Nonfiction Award: Alison Bechdel, *Fun Home: A Family Tragicomic* (Houghton Mifflin)

The Stonewall honor books in literature are:

The Manny Files by Christian Burch (Atheneum Books for Young Readers)

The Night Watch by Sarah Waters (Riverhead Books)

Rose of No Man's Land: A Novel by Michelle Tea (MacAdam/Cage Publishing)

A Scarecrow's Bible by Martin Hyatt (Suspect Thoughts Press)

The Stonewall honor books in nonfiction are:

Covering: The Hidden Assault on Our Civil Rights by Kenji Yoshino (Random House)

Gay Power: An American Revolution by David Eisenbach (Carroll & Graf)

Male-Male Intimacy in Early America: Beyond Romantic Friendships by William Benemann (Harrington Park Press)

Mama's Boy, Preacher's Son: A Memoir by Kevin Jennings (Beacon Press)

For more information: www.ala.org/ala/glbtrt/stonewall/stonewallbook.htm.

2007 Alice B. Awards

The Alice B. Medals are awarded to living writers for a body of work of "consistently well-written stories about lesbians." Each year at least one writer who is currently publishing is honored as is one writer who has not published within the last five years. The Lavender Certificate is awarded to the author of the committee's choice for best debut novel. This year's 2007 Alice B. Awards recipients are:

2007 Alice B. Medal

Alison Bechdel, Gerri Hill, Lori L. Lake, Lee Lynch, Marijane Meaker, Jane Rule

2007 Lavender Certificate

Brenda Adcock

See www.alicebawards.org for more information.

National Book Critics Circle Awards

This year's NBCC Award winners include Julie Phillips for *James Tiptree, Jr.: The Double Life of Alice B. Sheldon* (St. Martin's Press) in the Biography category (we reviewed it in [TLE #24](#)) and Kiran Desai for *The Inheritance of Loss* (Atlantic Monthly Press) for Fiction (reviewed in [MBW #7](#)). See www.bookcritics.org/?go=awards for more information and the complete list of winners.

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Special Note for Booksellers About BEA 2007

Are you attending Book Expo America this June in New York City? Mary from Out Word Bound Books in Indianapolis is organizing a get-together for feminist and LGBTQ bookstores to coincide with BEA. Perhaps a lunch gathering, this will be an opportunity to meet your queer bookselling sisters and brothers, exchange ideas, etc. If you're interested, write Mary at office@outwordbound.com or call 317.951.9100.

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Calls for Submissions

The deadline is March 15 for submissions to *Visible: A Femmethology*, an anthology of writing on queer femme identity. Editor Maria Angeline seeks personal essays which explore what femme means and "the power and complications in presenting femme as a gender and (in) breaking the traditional meaning of feminine." Submission instructions and more information can be found at www.femmethology.com. Send questions to maria.angeline@mergepress.com.

Chong-suk Han, guest editor for a forthcoming special issue of *The Journal of Gay and Lesbian Social Services: Issues in Practice, Policy & Research*, has announced a call for papers which examine the lives of LGBTQ people of color. "In recent decades, queer scholarship and scholarship on race have begun to examine what it means to be raced and/or

sexed in the U.S. Yet despite this movement, both Queer Studies and Ethnic Studies have often overlooked the existence of gay men and women of color. This special issue is an attempt to add to the scholarship about lesbians and gay men of color; where lesbians and gay men of color find a 'home' and what kind of home they find, what needs are specific to those who are both 'raced' and 'sexualized' and what are the factors that need to be addressed when working with people marginalized both along racial and sexual lines." Deadline for submission is July 31, 2007. Inquiries for this special issue should be directed to the guest editor at chan@temple.edu or cwhan@u.washington.edu (215.204.7751). Check out more about the journal at www.haworthpress.com.

Logan Gutierrez-Mock is looking for original essays and poems that address the specific experiences of multiracial and queer identities for an anthology called *Mixed Fruit: Writings from Multi-racial Queer Communities*. Creative nonfiction, interviews, essays, and poetry will all be considered. Deadline is May 15, 2007. For additional information, please contact Logan at logangutierrezmock@yahoo.com.

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Lesbian Literary Quiz, Part 3

In this final quiz from the York Lesbian Festival, we'll provide you with some memorable "last lines," and you can guess the author and novel. Answers will be provided in TLE #29. Again, our thanks to the women at the York Lesbian Festival for allowing us all to play along with them! (Answers to the "First Lines" quiz from [TLE #27](#) are below this new quiz.)

Guess the Author and Novel of these Last Lines

- 1: Rejoice little book! For on that day, we will be free.
- 2: They all walked over to the streetcar then, laughing, shouting, pulling at each other, on their day, in the middle of that beautiful sunny Sunday.
- 3: "You did it Gert."
"Did what?"
"You grew up."
- 4: I wrapped my fingers in Raylene's and watched the night close in around us.
- 5: October the twelfth stroke of midnight, Thursday, the eleventh of nineteen hundred and twenty-eight.
- 6: "We did it," she almost crowed. "We beat the bastards."
- 7: I've told you everything. My father came off a boat right enough.
- 8: But if it takes that long then watch out world - I'm going to be the hottest fifty-year-old this side of the Mississippi.
- 9: "It's Clarissa," he said. For there she was.
- 10: And they turned and walked back up the steps towards their own image, reflected in the great, glass doors.
- 11: She said, "You can't tell a gift how to come."
- 12: I know this fantastic offer will not be repeated. So I do.
- 13: "Acknowledge us, oh God, before the whole world. Give us also the right to our existence!"
- 14: When she came to the house, the porch light was on. And it was Ruth who opened the door.
- 15: "This is Kindly Light calling Manchester, come in Manchester, this is Kindly Light."
- 16: "I'll have bacon and eggs and then toast and marmalade," said Sybil.
- 17: From the speakers' tent came a muffled cheer, and a rising ripple of applause.
- 18: Careful, I'm everything you ever dreamed.
- 19: "I won't know for sure what love is till I've spoiled you for awhile, sweetheart," Beebo smiled.

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Answers to Lesbian Literary Quiz, Part 2

And here are the answers to **Guess the Author and Novel for These First Lines** from [TLE #27](#):

- 1: *Tipping the Velvet* - Sarah Waters
- 2: *Rubyfruit Jungle* - Rita Mae Brown
- 3: *The Accidental* - Ali Smith
- 4: *Lessons in Murder* - Claire McNab
- 5: *Common Murder* - Val McDermid
- 6: *The Female Man* - Joanna Russ
- 7: *Mrs. Dalloway* - Virginia Woolf
- 8: *The Well of Loneliness* - Radclyffe Hall
- 9: *Crocodile Soup* - Julia Darling
- 10: *Beebo Brinker* - Ann Bannon
- 11: *Leave a Light on For Me* - Jean Swallow
- 12: *Oranges are Not the Only Fruit* - Jeanette Winterson
- 13: *Stir-Fry* - Emma Donoghue
- 14: *Patience and Sarah* - Isabel Miller
- 15: *Orlando* - Virginia Woolf
- 16: *The Fires of Bride* - Ellen Galford
- 17: *Desert of the Heart* - Jane Rule
- 18: *Trumpet* - Jackie Kay
- 19: *Bastard Out of Carolina* - Dorothy Allison

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That's it for this issue of *The Lesbian Edition*. Do you know others who would appreciate knowing about new LGBT or feminist books? Gift subscriptions to any of the three editions of Books To Watch Out For make great presents for readerly friends and family members!

Until next month,

Suzanne Corson
editor@bookstowatchoutfor.com
for *Books To Watch Out For*



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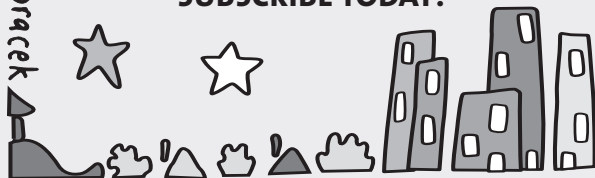
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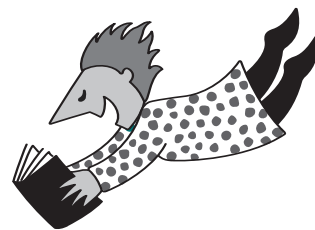
- ★ More Books for Women — just launched!
- ★ The Gay Men's Edition ★ The Lesbian Edition

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

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