



More Books for Women

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About BTWOF

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

More Books for Women

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

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Welcome to this issue of **More Books for Women**. You'll find recommendations from the women at Women and Children First as well as from Mary Ellen Kavanaugh, Sara Luce Look, and the mystery column from Nan Cinnater. In the kids' section, there are many suggestions for middle readers this time, and then we follow up with some news.

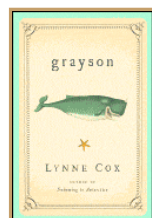
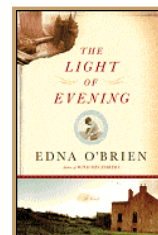
And for those who have sent their well-wishes to Carol, thank you. Carol did make it safely to Newcastle-upon-Tyne and is enjoying her first days as the new Director at *Msllexia*.

Enjoy!
Suzanne Corson



Ann Christophersen recommends...

I had intended to read a novel by Edna O'Brien for years. With her seventeen earlier works of fiction, one would think that during that broad span of time and work I might have accomplished that modest goal. When I received a reading copy of her latest novel, **The Light of Evening**, I determined the time had come, especially since my most revered writer, Alice Munro, had this to say on the back cover: "Reading O'Brien is like going into a special place full of radiant energy and intense understanding, unlike any other reading enclosure I know." Alice is resoundingly accurate. This novel about two generations of mother-daughter relationships is deeply resonant and nuanced: one feels the keenest sense of the love, dependency, pain, and irresolution that so many women feel, whichever side of the relationship they occupy. Dilly is the main character, an elderly and very resilient woman who, at the beginning of the novel, is suffering from a potentially terminal illness - she is on the way to the hospital to find out. She is also suffering the painful distance her daughter, Eleanor, has imposed on their relationship. Eleanor left home at a young age and, after a disapproved marriage, has stayed abroad ever since, with only brief visits home. In the course of the narrative, told in eight parts, sometimes in the first person, sometimes the third, we hear of Dilly's early adulthood as an Irish immigrant to the United States and her return home at her mother's request after the death of Dilly's brother. Many of the features of her relationship with her mother parallel to some extent the powerful but difficult connection she has with her own daughter. She longs for her daughter's company at this fragile, frightening time for herself, but Eleanor simply does not have the capacity to care for her mother - she is compelled to flee after a much too short visit to the hospital. The end of the narrative is heartbreaking in many respects, but there is resolution of a kind. The artfulness of this novel is simply stunning, and what gives the story its tremendous power. Houghton Mifflin, \$25, 9780618718672.



Many months ago I recommended one of my all-time favorite books by a woman athlete, *Swimming to Antarctica*, by Lynne Cox. In that book, this long distance swimmer captures the feelings of being in the water for hours on end, battling waves, currents, extreme cold, shifting weather - and her own psyche at times, faced with the enormous effort of keeping it together. In addition to the thrills of the physical sensations she relates and the amazing prowess she

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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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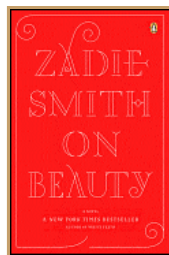
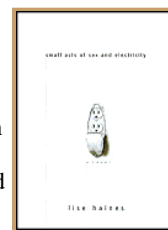


displays, Cox's story was very inspiring, too: she was motivated to take on challenges literally no one else had ever attempted not just "because they were there," but in order to accomplish political goals. Her new book, **Grayson**, tells a simpler story, but it is a very pleasurable book, too. In it she describes swimming one pre-dawn morning, doing her regular workout, when she senses that something is in the water near her - something large - swimming in pace. She fears it might be a shark, but after a period of time and some anxiety, she discovers what it is: a baby whale, on its own, clearly separated from its mother at a too tender age. The rest of the tale is of her attempts to help the babe she calls Grayson find its way back, and the sort of attachment the two form in the process. It's very sweet, a lovely near-parable about the connections that can develop when two parties look out not just for themselves but the other as well, even when those parties are of two different species. Knopf, \$16.95 hardcover, 9780307264541.



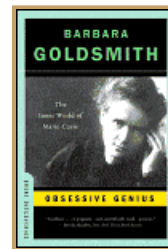
Linda Bubon suggests...

Lise Haines' **Small Acts of Sex and Electricity** is written in a voice wholly her own and captures the surreal sense of chaos and upheaval that often follows loss. Mattie, a single Chicago woman and art appraiser, flies out to the California coast to help her friend Jane, married with two daughters ages four and fourteen, in the wake of Jane's grandmother Franny's death. Franny has left her beach house and considerable estate to Jane and her sister, and Jane has become unraveled trying to sort through Franny's priceless antiques and hodgepodge of art and collectibles (including 59 bottles of bubble bath). Then Jane roars out in Franny's Jaguar, leaving Mattie the option of climbing into Jane's bed with Jane's husband, Mike, whom Mattie dated first and still loves. Mattie, Mike, and the two girls ricochet around the house, drinking too much, crashing into antique vases and each other, wondering if Jane will return. The chaos of the present is gradually revealed to be a legacy of Jane's and Mattie's childhood, a poignant mess of neglectful parents and too much independence, in which Franny was the one loving caretaker. Rich with metaphors, yet spare in description, *Small Acts of Sex and Electricity* is a compelling, memorable read. Unbridled Books, \$23.95, 9781932961270.



New in paperback, Zadie Smith's **On Beauty** brought me much pleasure in its opening scenes, reminiscent of E.M. Forster's *Howard's End*, one of my very favorite books. But there's so much going on in Smith's book, so many balls are tossed in the air and then brought crashing down at the end, that my reading pleasure wasn't completely sustained. That said, *On Beauty* is definitely worth reading, and, I think, would make a great book for discussion. No one I've read gets at the nuances of class and race issues like Zadie Smith. And her skewering of the pretensions of academics - particularly the insular, East Coast variety - is priceless. Penguin, \$15, 9780143037743.

Speaking of books for discussion, our book group recently discussed Barbara Goldsmith's **Obsessive Genius: The Inner World of Marie Curie**, which we found very relevant to current commentaries about the female brain and the dearth of women in science. Goldsmith does a wonderful job of helping the reader understand the enormous contributions of the Curies to nuclear medicine and energy. We all agreed that the book reads like a novel and gets at the essence of Marie Curie's amazing, admirable, and in many ways, tragic life. Raised in an intellectually rich but materially impoverished Polish family suffering under Russian repression, Marie, the youngest of five children, was kept physically distant from her tubercular mother and educated by her stern father. While still a child, two of her sisters and her mother died, triggering profound depression which would haunt her all her life. Goldsmith carefully traces her path to scientific greatness, her collaboration with her beloved husband Pierre, her lifelong pacifism, her heroic contributions during World War I (she was responsible for setting up, and with her teenage daughter, Irene, running mobile X-ray units at the front), the enormous competition among scientists to unlock the secrets of radium and its uses, the making of her iconography, and the legacy passed on to her daughters and granddaughters. Norton, \$14.95, 9780393327489.



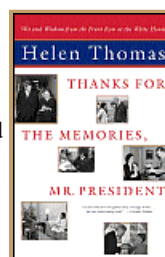


Angelique Grandone is enjoying...



Rebecca Solnit's ***A Field Guide to Getting Lost*** is a deeply felt meditation on exactly what you would think: the art and science of "lost." At times the book feels almost like a metaphysical dictionary entry comprised of essays, with each new section taking on a different fragment of meaning. We roll through an intoxication of themes, most notably the blue of distance, a recurring subheading for several sections of the book. Color theory plays its part, as does lost love, lost keys, abandoned buildings, forests, punk rock, the desert, and memory. Reading this book was like meeting a road-worn traveler at a small town bar and staying up talking until dawn without noticing. It was that good. You can't have my copy. Go buy your own. Penguin, \$15, 9780143037248.

Helen Thomas was in Chicago this month to keynote the Chicago Foundation for Women's Annual Luncheon and to promote her new book, ***Watchdogs of Democracy?: The Waning Washington Press Corps and How It Has Failed the Public*** (Simon and Schuster, \$25, 9780743267816). I haven't yet had a chance to read it (maybe next month!), but her previous book, ***Thanks for the Memories, Mr. President: Wit and Wisdom from the Front Row at the White House*** is a wonderful collection of her recollections, both profound and anecdotal, of life in and around the White House through the past eight administrations. Her wit is razor sharp and she is not afraid to tell a story on herself, but the insight she offers into the daily lives of great - and not so great - leaders is the most powerful aspect of the book. Her unique vantage point allows an uncommon proximity to our presidents' successes, failures, and everyday humanness. Simon and Schuster, \$14, 9780743202268.

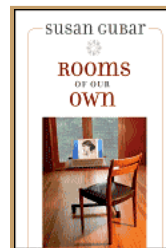


Mary Ellen Kavanaugh is reading...

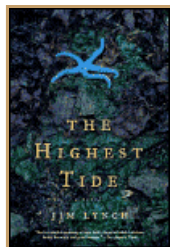


I just loved ***Save Your Own***, the debut novel by Elizabeth Brink. Now, I do have a thing for debut novels, it is true. I think that they are often exceptionally well written - they have to be to get the attention of a publisher. That said, this one falters a wee bit, only in the construction (more later - and I am willing to own my criticism as merely a personal quirk of my own). Our protagonist, Gillian Cormier-Brandenburg, the daughter of two cold and dry college professors, is herself in the process of writing (or, more to the point, *not* writing) her dissertation at Harvard Divinity School. At 26, she knows herself to be quite the outcast - she is physically homely, overly intellectual, and quite lacking in relationships of any kind with other human beings. The topic of her dissertation - secular conversion experiences - is not such a hit in her department, and, in truth, she is not entirely convinced herself that she really believes in them. On the brink of losing her funding, she takes a job in a halfway house for women - where she hopes to meet people whose life experiences will help her with her dissertation. As she struggles to connect with the women she meets, and what this brings up for her, she experiences what one could argue is her very own secular conversion. The book is laugh-out-loud funny. The characters are quirky and memorable. It raises interesting questions - about ethics, about "the academy," about doubt vs. faith, about desire, about knowing ourselves - and it is an interesting story line. (I know, so what could be the problem, you fussy reviewer, I hear you asking). Here it is: the essential story seems to "end" with a strong, but not entirely satisfying scene. Then, the last chapter is an epilogue - fast forwarding to Gillian's life twenty years hence. My quibble with this kind of ending is that I have been so involved in the details of Gillian's life (indeed, the book reads like a memoir), and I am quite invested in how she works out these life transitions on a day-to-day basis). If there is to be more, then I want more - not a summary! That said, do not let my personal bias against the ending prevent you from enjoying this delightful, intelligent read. Houghton Mifflin. \$23, 9780618651146.

Fan of Virginia Woolf? How about feminist literary criticism? You'll want **Rooms of Our Own** by Susan Gubar in your library, for sure! Gubar, whose name you most likely know from the classic *The Madwoman in the Attic: The Woman Writer and the Nineteenth-Century Literary Imagination*, has here, an interesting work. Written in a style which mimics Woolf's own work, this much respected literary critic takes on issues of feminism and writing/literary criticism in the academy. Although the writing is, at times, dense, and obscures the points she is making, it is, nonetheless both useful and informative. As a non-academician myself (but with degrees in literature and years of teaching said and bookselling experience going on), I have often felt excluded from academic discussions of literature - a point I often raised with the women of the "Textual Studies" department at the local university when they came in to my feminist bookstore. I appreciate Gubar's inquiry into the place of postmodern theory in literary studies, her look at how race is dealt with in feminist literary criticism, and more, all filtered through a memoir-like telling of an academic year. Univ. of Illinois Press. \$19.95 paperback, 9780252073793.

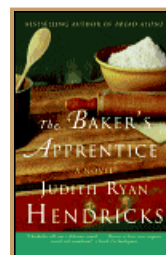


Sara Luce Look loves...



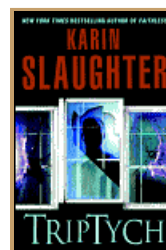
In Jim Lynch's **The Highest Tide**, a 13-year-old boy named Miles O'Malley is obsessed with Rachel Carson. He lives near Olympia, Washington, by Puget Sound, and he loves examining sea life. When Miles discovers a giant squid washed up on the beach, scientists gather to speak with him. He becomes a sort of cult hero, and his quiet life changes. This beautiful coming-of-age novel is interspersed with Rachel Carson's writing. Bloomsbury. \$13.95, 9781582346298.

Seattle based, Judith Rhine Hendricks wrote 2001's **Bread Alone** (Harper, \$13.95, 9780060084400), the story of Wynter, a woman in her thirties going through a nasty divorce. She gets a job in a bakery, learns to love herself again, and by the end of the book, has begun dating a guy named Mac. In the recently published sequel, **The Baker's Apprentice**, Wynter has bought into the bakery and Mac has left for Alaska. His story is interwoven with Wynter's and with the story of the bakery, which is quickly becoming a victim of gentrification. A good read - with recipes, too. Harper, \$13.95, 9780060726188.



South Mountain Company, located on Martha's Vineyard, is a worker-owned resource-conscious design / build firm. In **The Company We Keep: Reinventing Small Business for People, Community, and Place**, South Mountain founder John Abrams explains how the company grew, how they work by consensus, as a cooperative, what it means to work within your community as a small business, and how to put ethics into your workplace. There are chapters on cultivating workplace democracy, being environmentally sound, how to use consensus, etc.... Many feminist businesses do this already, but I still found this book very interesting. Abrams also discusses the concept of cohousing; South Mountain designed and built the first cohousing community on Martha's Vineyard. Chelsea Green, \$18, 9781933392196.

Karin Slaughter writes a **mystery series** set in Grant County, Georgia, featuring medical examiner Sara Linton, but this year she's released a stand-alone thriller named **Triptych**. In Atlanta, several young women, most involved in the sex trade, are dying. The story of these deaths is told in several different voices, with many subplots. We don't generally stock books at Charis with these kinds of crimes, but Karin's writing is so good, her characterizations so interesting, we make an exception for her books. *Triptych* is very suspenseful, taking you on lots of twists and turns in its complicated plot. Random House/Delacorte, \$25, 9780385339469.



(ed: A conversation between Karin Slaughter and Mo Hayder discusses, among other topics, why they write about violent crimes against women: www.karinslaughter.com/interviewMH.html.)



New in Paperback

FICTION

Making It Up, Penelope Lively, Penguin, \$14, 9780143037842.

Saving Fish From Drowning, Amy Tan, Random House/Ballantine, \$14.95, 9780345464019.

The Painted Drum, Louise Erdrich, Harper, \$13.95, 9780060515119.

The Last Days of Dogtown, Anita Diamant, Simon and Schuster, \$15, 9780743225748.

An Atomic Romance, Bobbie Ann Mason, Random House, \$13.95, 9780812975208.

NONFICTION

Bait and Switch: The (Futile) Pursuit of the American Dream, Barbara Ehrenreich, Henry Holt and Company, \$13, 9780805081244.

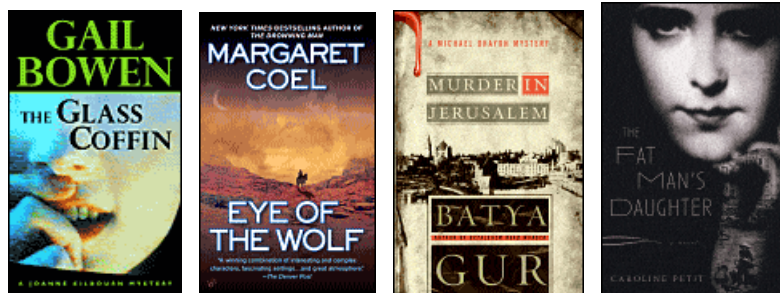
The Solitude of Self: Thinking about Elizabeth Cady Stanton, Vivian Gornick, Farrar, Straus & Giroux, \$11, 9780374530563.

Sisters: The Lives of America's Suffragists, Jean H. Baker, Hill & Wang, \$16, 9780809087037.



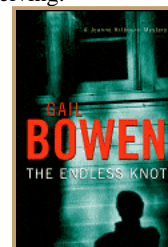
Mysteries

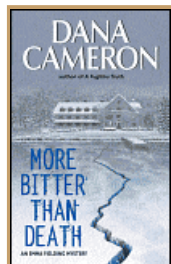
By Nan Cinnater



One of my all-time favorite mystery writers is Gail Bowen. Who, you may ask? Many U.S. readers have never heard of Bowen, doubtless because she's Canadian and her Canadian publisher (McClelland & Stewart) does not get great distribution in the States. Bowen's sleuth, Saskatchewan academic, widowed mom, and leftist politico Joanne Kilbourn has a full, complicated life. In *The Glass Coffin* (\$7.95, 9780771014772), it's December in Saskatchewan (a balmy twenty degrees below zero), and Joanne's best friend Jill is getting married to Mr. Wrong, a filmmaker whose strangely detached documentaries about his first and second wives, both suicides, created a sensation. Joanne is helpless to change her friend's mind, even when she finds the best man's body in the snow on the eve of the wedding. He appears to have died from natural causes, but appearances are deceiving.

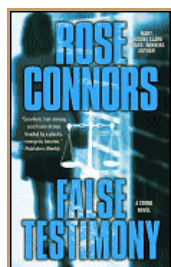
Bowen has a genius for melding realistic details about Joanne's family, friends, and daily life with the dark reality of murder. Thus she avoids the cozy cliché of an amateur sleuth who blithely keeps tripping over dead bodies. In Joanne Kilbourn's world, murder has an impact on her and those around her. One reviewer called these books "small works of elegance that assume the reader...is looking for more than blood and guts, that she is looking for the meaning behind a life lived and a life taken" (Catherine Ford, *Calgary Herald*). Bowen just published her tenth Joanne Kilbourn mystery, *The Endless Knot* (\$22.95, 9780771016547). Her most recent paperback is *The Last Good Day* (\$7.95, 9780771014680). Her first six books are available in omnibus editions: *The Early Investigations of Joanne Kilbourn* (\$16.95, 9780771014673) and *The Further Investigations of Joanne Kilbourn* (\$18.95, 9780771014697). Especially if you're a fan of unabashedly feminist, intellectual writers like Laurie R. King or Amanda Cross, her books are worth special ordering.





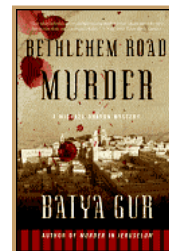
Not nearly as masterful, but certainly worth picking up in the airport or reading on vacation are the academic mysteries by Dana Cameron featuring historical archaeologist Emma Fielding. In **More Bitter Than Death**, Emma attends a conference at an isolated New England hotel, which, in time-honored mystery tradition, is snowed in. The conference was organized to honor a legend in the field - legendary for his temper, overbearing opinions, and bad behavior generally. Not surprisingly, he turns up dead. The best part is Cameron's depiction of the relationships, politics, and gossip behind the scenes in academia, but we could have used even more of the intriguing archaeological details about pipe stems and blue China patterns. Avon, \$6.99, 9780060554637.

Like that grand master of the mystery genre Tony Hillerman, Margaret Coel is not Native American, but she writes convincingly and respectfully about an Indian society in her mysteries set on an Arapaho reservation in Wyoming. Coel features two sleuths, Arapaho attorney Vicky Holden and Jesuit priest Father John O'Malley. Father John is the pastor of the reservation mission, a white-man's-burden position that should be more politically problematic than Coel acknowledges. If you can get past that, the characters are well drawn, the mysteries well-plotted, and the Arapaho history and culture fascinating. In Coel's latest, **The Drowning Man** (Berkley/Prime Crime, \$23.95, 9780425211717), the title refers to a 2,000-year-old petroglyph, or rock carving, that Arapahos believe embodies a protective spirit. The drowning man is stolen - cut right out of the rock - to feed the black market in Indian relics. Meanwhile a logging company threatens to run a highway through the sacred canyon that is home to many other carvings. Another subplot involves the church coverups of pedophile priests. In **Eye of the Wolf** (Berkley/Prime Crime, \$7.99, 9780425208090), a modern-day crime echoes a historical massacre of the Arapaho, and threatens to bring back a state of war between the Arapaho and Shoshone peoples.



Back in the days before John Grisham, books about the judicial system were called courtroom dramas rather than legal thrillers. Real-life Massachusetts trial attorney Rose Connors writes courtroom dramas, short on thrills perhaps but long on drama - and long on charm of the Cape Cod variety. **False Testimony** has a plot right out of yesterday's headlines: the senior senator from Massachusetts (guess who) is implicated in the disappearance of an attractive young intern (well, assistant, but you get the idea). Former prosecutor, now defense attorney Marty Nickerson is tapped to represent the senator. Marty is a likeable single mom and an intelligent lawyer who lives on Cape Cod. The trial scenes in particular ring convincingly true. A separate homicide case is intertwined with the senator's, keeping Marty and the reader guessing. Pocket Books, \$6.99, 9780743492706.

Batya Gur, who died of cancer in 2005, was in many ways the P.D. James of Israel. Like James, Gur wrote psychologically complex novels featuring an attractive, brooding, and highly ranked police detective, whose investigations often take him into a somewhat cloistered world of the intellect or the arts. Gur's first book, **The Saturday Morning Murder** (Harper, \$11, 9780060995089) - punningly subtitled *A Psychoanalytic Case* - was set in a psychoanalytic institute, and subsequent books were set on a kibbutz, in a university, and among classical musicians. In **Bethlehem Road Murder** (translated by Vivian Eden, \$14.95, 9780060954925) Chief Superintendent Michael Ohayon investigates a murder in an actual neighborhood defined by geography and ethnicity, making this Gur's most overtly political book. A woman's corpse is found on the roof of an abandoned building in a Jerusalem neighborhood with a large Arab population. The victim turns out to be a Yemenite activist who was looking into a historical scandal, the kidnapping of Yemenite babies in the 1950s. Ohayon must sift through the victim's family and professional relationships, as well as the implications of her activism, in a neighborhood full of tensions - not just between Arabs and Jews but between Yemenite and Ashkenazi Jews. In Gur's sixth and last book, **Murder in Jerusalem** (Harper, \$24.95, 9780060852931), a television set designer is killed by a falling pillar, bringing Ohayon into the world of Israel's national TV network, Channel One.



Creating the Fictional Female Detective: The Sleuth Heroines of British Women Writers, 1890-1940 by Carla T. Kungl is an excellent academic study of Victorian and Golden Age British women detectives which "explore[s] the ways that creating female detectives...helped women writers shape their own professional

authority...." Inspired by the parallels between Dorothy L. Sayers and her fictional detective Harriet Vane, who also happens to be a mystery writer, Kungl looks at the historical "problem" of professions for women, as it is reflected in detective fiction and in the lives of the writers. I'm just happy to see attention paid to such early women characters as Lady Molly of Scotland Yard (a fictional policewoman decades before that was a reality), created by Baroness Orczy, and Mrs. Bradley, a psychoanalyst detective created by Gladys Mitchell. Kungl's style is readable enough to make this of interest to zealous fans as well as scholars. McFarland & Company, \$32 paperback, 9780786425280.

At first glance, **The Fat Man's Daughter** by Caroline Petit looks like one of those fabulous 1930s movies set in an exotic location with, of course, Sydney Greenstreet as the fat man of the title, and maybe Myrna Loy as the young, sexy but cynical daughter. Petit's book is both more and less than that. At its best, it is a very literary recreation of wartorn China, occupied Manchuria, and the invasion of Nanking. Less successfully, it is a dark, psychosexual coming-of-age tale about a young woman who can depend only on herself in a very dangerous world. Leah is the nineteen-year-old daughter of a European expert on Chinese antiquities living in Hong Kong. When her father dies, Leah is left with debts and the bad faith of those around her, except for An Li, her caretaker since she was a child. Leah's best chance to save her father's business is to cooperate with a Chinese Nationalist soldier, travel to Japanese-occupied Manchuria, and steal a treasure from the Emperor. The real mystery in this novel of suspense is Leah herself, who remained opaque to me. We know about her beauty, and the reactions of other people, especially men. But the flat, factual narration, so effective in evoking place and period, stays on the surface of the characters, and Leah remains an enigma to the end. Soho, \$12, 9781569474242.

Mysteries Newly in Paperback:

Grave Sight, Charlaine Harris, Berkley, \$7.99, 9780425212899.

Death and Judgment, Donna Leon, Penguin, \$7.99, 9780143035824.

Predator, Patricia Cornwell, Berkley, \$9.99 (in the new slightly larger, easier-to-read pocket book format), 9780425210277.



What They're Reading...

at Women & Children First

Chicago, Illinois

www.womenandchildrenfirst.com

1. **Fun Home: A Family Tragicomic**, Alison Bechdel, Houghton Mifflin, \$19.95 hardcover, 9780618477944.
2. **A Field Guide to Lesbian and Gay Chicago**, Kathie Bergquist and Robert McDonald, Lake Claremont Press, \$15.95, 9781893121034.
3. **The History of Love**, Nicole Krauss, W.W. Norton, \$13.95, 9780393328622.
4. **Water for Elephants**, Sara Gruen, Algonquin Books, \$23.95, 9781565124998.
5. **Runaway**, Alice Munro, Random House/Vintage, \$14.95, 9781400077915.
6. **Fire Sale** (V.I. Warshawski), Sara Paretsky, \$9.99, 9780451218995.
7. **Alone in the Trenches: My Life as a Gay Man in the NFL**, Esera Tuaolo, Sourcebooks, \$24.95, 9781402205057.
8. **Hit by a Farm: How I Learned to Stop Worrying and Love the Barn**, Catherine Friend, Marlowe & Company, \$14.95, 9781569242988.
9. **Gilead**, Marilynne Robinson, St. Martin's Press/Picador, \$14, 9780312424404.
10. **Seducing the Demon: Writing for My Life**, Erica Jong, Penguin/Tarcher, \$22.95, 9781585424443.

And at Charis Books & More

Atlanta, Georgia

<http://charis.booksense.com>

1. **A Song to Sing, a Life to Live: Reflections on Music as Spiritual Practice**, Emily Saliers and Don Saliers, Jossey Bass, \$16.95 paperback, 9780787983772.
2. **We Speak Your Names**, Pearl Cleage, Ballantine, \$8.95 hardcover, 9780345490278.
3. **Fun Home: A Family Tragicomic**, Alison Bechdel, Houghton Mifflin, \$19.95 hardcover, 9780618477944.
4. **Shattering the Stereotypes: Muslim Women Speak Out**, Fawzia Afzal-Khan, Olive Branch Press, \$20 paperback, 9781566565691.
5. **Hello, Cruel World: 101 Alternatives to Suicide for Teens, Freaks, and Other Outlaws**, Kate Bornstein, Seven Stories Press, \$14.95, 9781583227206.

6. **Behind the Pine Curtain**, Gerri Hill, Bella Books, \$13.95, 9781594930577.
 7. **A Taste of Sin**, Fiona Zedde, Kensington Publishing, \$14, 9780758209207.
 8. **Courage of the Blue Boy**, Robert Neubecker, Tricycle Press, \$15.95 hardcover, 9781582461823.
 9. **Hit by a Farm: How I Learned to Stop Worrying and Love the Barn**, Catherine Friend, Marlowe & Company, \$14.95, 9781569242988.
 10. **There is a Flower at the Tip of My Nose Smelling Me**, Alice Walker and Stefano Vitale, HarperCollins, \$16.99 hardcover, 9780060570804.



For the Kids



Recommendations from Linda Bubon

Esme Raji Codell has followed up her terrific book for middle-schoolers, *Sahara Special*, with an even better one, **Vive La Paris**. Paris McCray is in fifth grade (with Sahara), a real smartypants who starts a newsletter for a class reading club and a lending library. She also has her hands full trying to keep her 8th-grade brother Michael from getting beat up on daily by a much bigger, tougher 5th-grade *girl* classmate. She and Michael both spend afternoons with the endearing "old white lady," Mrs. Rosen, who is giving Paris piano (and life) lessons while Michael listens to her old recordings of cabaret music. Mrs. Rosen has a lot of joie de vivre which she tries to impart to the preoccupied, serious Paris. She also gives Paris her felt yellow star from her memory box, which Paris interprets as a badge of honor from a gang Mrs. Rosen was a part of, and so wears it to school. All the kids in class make paper stars, wearing them proudly, ignorantly, until they are brought up short by an enraged teacher and older Jewish student. Paris' "punishment" is to read about and write a paper on the Holocaust. Stunned and depressed by what she learns, Paris has a crisis of faith. The subplot about Michael and his nemesis is intriguing, too, and a subtle introduction to kids about children possessing a gay sensibility. Codell handles these weighty, complex matters deftly, never losing the charm of Paris' voice while conveying the humor and innocence of kids figuring out life. Hyperion, \$15.99 hardcover, 9780786851249.

I'm always bemoaning the fact that way too many children's books are either pink or blue, princess-y or superhero-ish, clearly intended for one gender or the other. And then Darcy Pattison delights me with **19 Girls and Me**, illustrated by Steven Salerno. Kindergartener John Hercules finds himself the lone boy in a class of 19 girls, and his second-grader brother keeps warning him, "Those girls will turn you into a sissy," which worries him. But each new day is a new adventure as the girls dig to China, paddle a boat into the Amazon, hammer together a skyscraper to a space station, and build a super-fast race car which they name the Sarah Louise, a "sissy name," declares John; "No," Faith Gish said, "that's my grandmother's name." In the end, John's brother agrees that the 19 "tomboys" in John's class are pretty cool, but John corrects him: "Nineteen friends." For ages 4 to 7. Philomel, \$16.99 hardcover. 9780399243363.

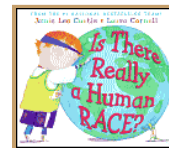


For the youngest listeners, **Brave Bitsy and the Bear** by Angela McAllister and Tiphany Beek promises to be a big hit. A sweet story with a nicely paced beginning, middle, and end, it concerns a brave little lost doll who helps a sleepy bear to his hibernating spot and, with the help of other forest animals, covers him with a blanket of branches and moss. Bitsy finds her way home to her little girl's bed, but in the spring she finds Bear again and he thanks her for her kindness. I loved the soft illustrations that will help children learn about the seasons, too. Clarion, \$16 hardcover, 9780618639946.



For 5- to 9-year olds who pick up on the cultural buzz around Marie Antoinette this season, **Moi & Marie Antoinette** by Lynn Cullen is the perfect book. Narrated by Sebastien, Marie's pampered pug pooch, this offers an illuminating and endearing look at the young queen's life, from girlhood through parenthood, showing both the glittery court life of 18th-century France and the constrictions of endless costuming and hairdressing. Sebastien's take is both witty and sympathetic. This will be a good book for both home and school libraries. Beautifully illustrated by Amy Young. Bloomsbury, \$16.95 hardcover, 9781582349589.

From the talented team of Jamie Lee Curtis and Laura Cornell comes **Is There Really a Human Race?**, written for all ages. I found the two-year-olds could sit through a reading of this book because of the bouncy rhyming verses, but the parents listened to the wisdom within:



"So, take what's inside you and make big, bold choices./ And for those who can't speak for themselves, use **bold** voices./ And make friends and love well./ bring art to this place./ And make the world better/ for the whole human race."

I loved the final artwork which shows the bottom of a globe stretched across two pages, and in one corner, a Jew and an Arab are playing "go fish" on a park bench, while in the other corner a mom is blowing bubbles while her child is playing an accordion. HarperCollins, \$16.99 hardcover, 9780060753467.

Recommendations from Sara Luce Look

Blow Out the Moon by Libby Koponen, new in paper, is a coming-of-age novel based on the author's diary, written in diary form - with the author's photos included. Set in the fifties, *Blow Out the Moon* is the story of an American girl whose family moves to London, where she attends a boarding school for girls. This book is entertaining for kids, capturing the romance and mystique of British boarding schools. Little, Brown / Megan Tingley Books, \$6.99, 9780316014809.

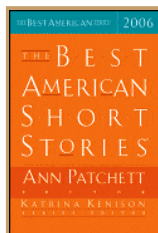
The latest book by *Ella Enchanted* author Gail Carson Levine is the fantasy novel **Fairest**. Commoner Aza lives in a kingdom where singing and beauty are prized above all else. Aza, who at fifteen is homely and awkward, has the most beautiful voice. When a new queen - who cannot sing - comes into town to marry the king, she wants Aza to sing for her. *Fairest* is about finding yourself, learning to love yourself, and is a reminder that beauty is only skin deep. Harper, \$16.99 hardcover, 9780060734084.



In **The Green Glass Sea**, set in the forties, two misfit girls who live in Los Alamos, New Mexico, become close friends. Dewey, who lives with her scientist dad, is a tomboy who loves to create her own gadgets. She walks around with a book called *The Boy Mechanic* (since there are no "girl mechanic" books) and hangs out with her friend, Suze. Suze is an artistic type, whose mother and father are both scientists. Their parents are working on a secret project, referred to as "the gadget," which is supposed to help end the war. *The Green Glass Sea* is a well-written, issue-driven book which lends itself well to the sequel the author is currently working on. Viking, \$16.99 hardcover, 9780670061341, available October 19.



Books To Watch Out For From Ann Patchett



The author of *Taft*, *The Magician's Assistant*, and *Bel Canto* hasn't had a new book out since 1994's memoir *Truth and Beauty*, about her friendship with writer Lucy Grealey (*Autobiography of a Face*). This October, you can get an idea of her taste in short fiction by checking out **The Best American Short Stories 2006** (Houghton Mifflin, \$14, 9780618543526) for which Patchett was this year's guest editor. It was also just announced that she's signed a two-book deal with Harper: one is a short nonfiction book based on a recent commencement speech she gave while the other is a novel tentatively titled *Run*, scheduled for publication in fall 2007.

Mixed Media - For Kids of All Ages

Philip Pullman's His Dark Materials trilogy has often been referred to as "Harry Potter for girls," with its strong girl protagonist, Lyra Belacqua. This December, New Line Cinema will release a movie based on the first book in the trilogy, *The Golden Compass*. And recently Scholastic U.K. and New Line have made a deal with Sega for a series of computer/video games based on the trilogy. This is great news for adventurous girls who will be able to see girls like themselves in the games as leaders, not merely sidekicks or victims. And hopefully these games will lead kids back to the original books.

Ms. recently published an interesting article about feminists and gaming:

www.msmagazine.com/summer2006/morethanagame.asp.



Passings

Oriana Fallaci 1929-2006

After battling cancer for a decade, Oriana Fallaci died in Florence, Italy, in September. She was infamous for her political reporting, especially during the Vietnam War and the Middle East conflicts in the seventies and eighties, and for interviews with world leaders, including Henry Kissinger, Golda Meir, Indira Ghandi, and Yassar Arafat. She also wrote fiction, such as the 1992 novel *Inshallah*, about the peace-keeping forces in 1983 Lebanon. In later years, Fallaci became much more conservative in her views and was especially critical of Muslims and Islamic extremists. Several of the obituaries remarked about this shift and how critics labeled her as both racist and a notorious homophobe the last several years of her life.

New York Times obituary:

[www.nytimes.com/2006/09/16/books/16fallaci.html?](http://www.nytimes.com/2006/09/16/books/16fallaci.html?ex=1316059200&en=9bcadc79a106d0e0&ei=5088&partner=rssnyt&emc=rss)

[ex=1316059200&en=9bcadc79a106d0e0&ei=5088&partner=rssnyt&emc=rss](http://www.nytimes.com/2006/09/16/books/16fallaci.html?ex=1316059200&en=9bcadc79a106d0e0&ei=5088&partner=rssnyt&emc=rss)

A tribute and information site:

www.giselle.com/oriana.html

Ann Richards 1933-2006

One-time Texas Governor and Democratic National Party firebrand Ann Richards also died in September; she learned she had esophageal cancer this past March. Ann Richards was an unapologetic feminist politician, who included the remark that Ginger Rogers did everything Fred Astaire did, backwards and in high heels, in her 1988 Democratic Convention keynote address. She also wrote two books: a political memoir penned while she was state treasurer of Texas, *Straight from the Heart: My Life in Politics and Other Places*, and more recently, *I'm Not Slowing Down: My Battle With Osteoporosis*.

Molly Ivins remembers Ann Richards:

www.truthdig.com/report/item/20060915_molly_ivins_remembering_ann_richards/

Liz Smith on Ann Richards' passing:

[www.salon.com/mwt/feature/2006/09/14/smith_on_richards/index.html?](http://www.salon.com/mwt/feature/2006/09/14/smith_on_richards/index.html?source=newsletter)

[source=newsletter](http://www.salon.com/mwt/feature/2006/09/14/smith_on_richards/index.html?source=newsletter)

CNN obituary:

www.cnn.com/2006/POLITICS/09/13/richards.obit.ap/index.html



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Suzanne Corson

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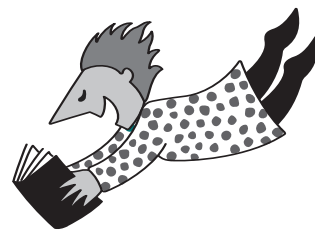
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