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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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More Books for Women

- April 2006 -
Volume 2 Number 4

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

This issue we welcome the first of our new reviewers, Mary Ellen Kavanaugh, while continuing to enjoy the recommendations of the Women & Children First 4. We'll be adding several more feminist bookseller/reviewers over the next few months, to bring you an even wider selection of books, viewpoints, priorities, and pleasures. This issue we've also moved the Kids Books column from the top of the issue to a bit further down (click on it in the table of contents to the left to go there now). And the Mysteries column will return next issue.

If you're traveling — whether across town or around the world — and are stopping someplace where people are interested in books, could you take along some **BTWOF** fliers and pass them out? We'd love it — and so will the readers you'll turn on to **BTWOF**. And it's a great way to strike up a few conversations. Put the fliers on the literature table, post them in the loo, or pass them out: I hate standing in lines myself, but I love walking up them and asking women if they read books. (Someone will almost always hold your place while you do it.) When I get that "*Duh! Does the sun rise in the east?*" look in response to my question, I know I'm on the verge of a great conversation. Email Leigh@BooksToWatchOutFor.com or call us at 415-642-9993 if you have a little room in your bag for some **BTWOF** fliers and a few minutes to distribute them.

Many thanks! And I hope you enjoy this issue and the books in it.

Yours in spreading the words,

Carol Seajay
Publisher

Awards

Here's a new concept in book awards: **The Blooker Awards**, created by publishing-on-demand site Lulu.com to recognize (and encourage) the burgeoning trend in turning blog content into books. The first Blooker Grand Prize (\$2000) went to **Julie and Julia: 365 Days, 524 Recipes, 1 Tiny Apartment Kitchen** (Little Brown, \$23.95), Julie Powell's blog-turned-book about the year in her life that she committed to cooking every recipe in Julia Child's 1961 classic, *Mastering the Art of French Cooking*. A frustrated fiction writer working as a secretary, stuck in a black hole of not completing anything, and facing the existential crisis of turning 30, Powell decided to cook her way into a new life. Her husband told her about blogging, and she jumped in. Within a few weeks she realized that she was developing a readership beyond her immediate friends and family. People she'd never met were writing back, commenting, and encouraging her. By the time she finished she had thousands of regular readers, a market for her book (100,000 copies in print), and a lot more confidence.

The **Blooker Fiction Prize** went to *Four and Twenty Blackbirds* by Cherie Priest (Tor, \$13.95) which *Publishers Weekly* called a "classic Southern gothic with an edgy modern makeover."

Meanwhile, **Baghdad Burning**, (Feminist Press, \$14.95, reviewed in *The Lesbian Edition #15*), the "blook" based on a blog kept by an unnamed Iraqi woman who uses the handle "Riverbend", has been nominated for England's prestigious **Samuel Johnson Prize**, which carries a £30,000 purse. It won a **Lettre Ulysses** award for the art of reportage (€20,000).

The Lesbian Edition

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

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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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Feminist Publishing

Gloria Jacobs is the new executive director of **The Feminist Press**. She comes to the press as an activist and a life-long journalist covering women's issues. She's been an editor at *Ms.* and served on the board of Women's eNews, most recently as its Chair. Her publications include *Women, War, Peace* on the effects of war on women and women's role in peace-building and *Women and HIV: Confronting the Crisis* for the United Nations Development Fund and the United Nations Population Fund, and, with Barbara Ehrenreich and Elizabeth Hess, *Re-Making Love: The Feminization of Sex*.

Spinsters Ink has just published the first book in its new incarnation: *French Postcard*, is Jane Merchant's tale of an American woman living in France with her husband and children and her mild flirtation with the mother of one of her children's schoolmates. (\$14.95.) More books to come.

"Mainstream" Publishing

Another new publishing division named for women: **Spiegel & Grau** is a new Random House imprint named for its cofounders **Cindy Spiegel** and **Julie Grau**. "Naming a house after its (female) founders feels both old-fashioned and radical and reflects our personal commitment to stand behind our books," the two said. Suze Orman's *Women + Money* will be their first book. Look for it in March 2007.

And in **the oxymoron department**: Gilroy, a 20 year veteran of Christian publishing, has a new imprint they call "Integrity" which will publish, as its first book, a new book by Newt Gingrich.

Media

BTWOF was entertained by the *New York Times*'s somewhat dismissive review of Gail Sheehy's *Sex and the Seasoned Woman*. It was promptly refuted via a letter from **Helen Gurley Brown**. Brown countered the reviewer's comments about "sloppy and awkward prose," questioned the reviewer's objection to the premise of the book — that women over 50 can and should continue to be sexual creatures — and cheerfully celebrated being sexually active "pleasurably [and] reasonably frequently at 84" with a 90-year-old "playmate." *BTWOF* says, "You keep on keeping on!"

People magazine recently chose *My Body Politic* (reviewed by Pam Harcourt *MBW #5*) as a March Best Pick.

Women Action & the Media

The **Center for New Words** (CNW) — recently a feminist bookstore, now a nonprofit celebrating and promoting women's words — just hosted a third, spectacular **WAM!** conference. It was truly a meeting of the minds as 300+ from all across the media and community (as well as the age range) met to pool information, skills, ideas, and to make more room in the world for women and women's visions. Keynote speakers included Maria Hinojosa, Carly Rivers, and Farai Chideya. Thirty-seven workshops ranged from "Funding Media in the Service of Social Justice" to "(Web)sites of Resistance: Why Our Blogs Matter"; from "Exploring Women & Comics" to "Covering Women & War." And, of course, there was a concurrent film festival, a poetry slam, and a wonderful rendition of "I Heard It on the (WAM!) Listserv." Critiques of corporate media were everywhere, and the importance of all the alternatives to it (such as the Spanish-language media that fueled the massive Immigration Rights rallies and even this rag you're reading at this moment) were sub-themes throughout the conference.

But the conference isn't really over: you can download and listen to all of the keynotes, as well as many of CNW's readings via their website at

www.centerfornewwords.org/ and
<http://forum.wgbh.org/wgbh/forum.php?organization=Center+for+New+Words>

If you work in the media — or want to — or care passionately about it, write **WAM! 4** into your schedule for next year.

Celebrate Sisterhood (Bookstore): *Share Your Stories & Memories*

Sisterhood operated in Los Angeles as a feminist, lesbian, and progressive center for 27 years, from 1972 to 1999, with a branch at the Woman's Building in the mid-1970's.

Now co-owners and co-founders **Simone Wallace** and **Adele Wallace** (former sisters-in-law); Simone's daughter **Emily Gold** (who grew up in the bookstore), writer/web-designer **Irene Wolt**; and educator/author **Ronni Sanlo**, are working on a book and website (speaking of Blogger awards!) to document the history and impact of Sisterhood Bookstore through the voices of the women who passed through its doors.

If you have memories of the store, visited it, read or performed there, you're invited to send a sentence, a paragraph, or a chapter on your experiences of Sisterhood Bookstore. It's easy to do on the Sisterhood Bookstore Project website at <http://www.inkwellweb.com/Sisterhood/sisterhood.htm>. Click by for a moment to check it out, enjoy the photos, make sure you're on the list of women who read or performed at the store, and fill out their (brief) survey.

Passings

Change Makers bookstore in Oakland is closing its doors on May 1, its third anniversary. The store opened in the old **Mama Bears Bookstore** location as that store was closing. Mama Bears was founded by **Carol Wilson** and **Alice Molloy**, two of the four women who co-founded **ICL-A Woman's Place Bookstore**, one of the — if not *the* — first women's bookstore(s) in the U.S. Carol and Alice, when last I talked to them, were enjoying being retired. "We were tired," Carol explained.

Muriel Spark, who was best known for *The Prime of Miss Jean Brodie*, died April 14 at 88.

New York Times story: www.nytimes.com/2006/04/16/world/16spark.html

On the Road With Books

Book readers, reviewers, and publishers of *Bookwomen* magazine **Glenda Martin** and **Mollie Hoben** take readers on the road (to Alaska, to Utah) and on retreat (Arizona, Michigan, Minnesota, New Mexico) to indulge in a week or a weekend of books, the landscapes they come from, and discussions about them. What an essential luxury! Details at: www.womenspress.com/main.asp?SectionID=10&SubSectionID=37&TM=37986.53 or call The Minnesota Women's Press at 651-646-3968.

Chicago novelist, journalist, and poet **Achy Obejas** will be teaching a **summer writing workshop** in the Mexican beach town of Sayulita, from June 18 to 25. It's part of the **Talleres Toltecatl** workshop series. Details at www.toltecatl.com.mx/.



Mary Ellen Kavanaugh is reading...

MBW's newest reviewer, Mary Ellen Kavanaugh, was the founder and owner of My Sisters' Words bookstore in Syracuse (1987-2003). She currently works at a book distributor, Consortium, and has recently started working part-time at Amazon, the feminist bookstore in Minneapolis. I've read many an excellent book on her recommendation and am very pleased to be able to bring her suggestions to you in the pages of MBW. —CS

My reading tends to go in streaks; either I'm reading all fiction or all nonfiction. It's been a long time since I've been on a fiction streak, but so far 2006 has been a fiction reader's dream come true: In January I read Zadie Smith's **On Beauty**, (Penguin, \$25.95), in February it was Ali Smith's **The Accidental** (Pantheon, \$22.95), and in March, Sigrid Nunez' **The Last of Her Kind**. All deeply satisfying reads — beautiful writing, masterful plots, thought provoking themes and interesting characters — do you need any more from fiction?

Sigrid Nunez's (*Feather on the Breathe of God*) most recent novel, **The Last of Her Kind**, is delicious. I was contemplating taking a day off work to read it when I got the flu and was too sick to even pick up the book — and that was a sad day. When I did get to it, I fell utterly into it. Set at Barnard at the tail end of the 60s, it evokes all that you might imagine it would. Anne and George are first-year roommates and have quite dissimilar backgrounds. In fact, Anne had requested on her application to room with someone as different as possible. Deeply troubled by her family's



privilege, Anne romanticizes George's working class roots. Together the two young women are moved by all the social change that time period brought, and their lives are shaped by their reactions to the events of the day. There is so much in this book about class (how refreshing – when was the last time you saw class intentionally handled in fiction?) and race and women. There is an underlying theme around *The Great Gatsby* here (shades of *Reading Lolita in Tehran* anyone?) and I, for one, would love to know that there are lots of conversations going on among readers about the place of *Gatsby* in our U.S. "canon,"

what "the great American novel" is, and whether or not people think **The Last of Her Kind** might qualify as a "great American novel." It does in my book. The title is a reference to a line in *Middlemarch*. Excellent reading group choice. 384 pages, Farrar, Straus & Giroux, \$25 (0374183813).

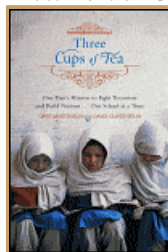


Linda Bubon recommends...

Gentle, refreshingly honest, and rarely sentimental, **Great with Child**, by Beth Ann Fennelly, brought back the sensual and emotional memories of early motherhood. With a poet's eye and voice Fennelly captures the confusing, scary, and delicious days of pregnancy and early motherhood in letters she writes to a newly pregnant former student. This is a great gift for expectant parents and new moms, especially those who write or paint or make music and worry about balancing their needs with the demands of motherhood. She holds out the promise that motherhood can enrich and add meaning to one's creative work. Norton, \$22.95 (0393061825).



I must mention Greg Mortenson's (with David Oliver Relin) **Three Cups of Tea**, a remarkable story by a former mountaineer who has quietly been responsible for the building of 55 schools (with 40 more in process) in Afghanistan and Pakistan. After attempting a climb of K2, he came down from the mountain beaten, walked for five days, and then found help and healing in a tiny Pakistani village. He vowed to come back and build a school for the village, but his early attempts at fundraising in his native U.S. failed. Finally he turned to the children in his mother's school, and a penny drive raised enough to get started. I cannot begin to tell you how moved and impressed I was hearing this humble man describe his dedication to girls' education as a means to world peace as well as physical and economic survival in this war-torn, impoverished corner of the world – or how angry I am that my tax dollars are being so misspent "creating democracy" in Iraq. Viking, \$25.95 (0670034827).



Julia Alvarez's rich new novel, **Saving The World**, tells parallel stories of two women tied to well-intentioned, altruistic men — one of them is struggling with mid-life crises and writer's block in the present, the other is crossing the ocean from Spain in 1803 with twenty orphan boys who are live carriers of smallpox vaccine. Alvarez is a great writer of historical fiction, and the story of Doña Isabel and the doctor Francisco Xavier Balmis is a fascinating one, but it was the voice of the contemporary writer, Alma, that kept me hooked and turning pages. Algonquin, \$24.95 (156512510X).



Two of my favorite books from last year are now out in paperback: **The Treehouse: Eccentric Wisdom from My Father on How to Live, Love, and See** by Naomi Wolf (Simon & Schuster, \$14), is a delight and a must-read for anyone searching for (or avoiding) the artist within. Wolf's father studied and taught poetry all his life and has a remarkable gift for helping people discover their passion

in life and follow it. In sharing his lessons, while helping Wolf build a treehouse for her children and renovate a country cottage, he helps his daughter, her best friend, and all of us. Simon & Schuster, \$14 (074324978X).

Lighthousekeeping by Jeanette Winterson is like no other novel I've read, part fairy tale, part yarn, part poetry, and all Winterson. "My mother called me Silver. I was born part precious metal part pirate," begins this highly original fable which fired my imagination and delighted my senses. The orphaned Silver comes under the "care" of Pew, the old lighthouse keeper, who tells her the compelling story of Babel Dark and his two women. Just suspend your idea of traditional storytelling and let Winterson take you on a sensual, memorable ride. Harcourt, \$14 (0151011176).



More books recently released in paperback:

Towelhead, Alicia Erian

Red Azalea, Anchee Min

Ya-Yas in Bloom, Rebecca Wells



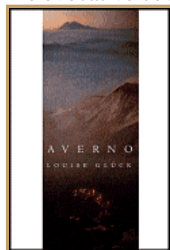
Ann Christophersen is loving...

The subtitle of an amazingly powerful new book, **Dragonslippers**, is "This Is What an Abusive Relationship Looks Like." The reader literally does see what such a relationship looks like because the book is a graphic memoir, constructed of drawings the author made during the ten years she lived the nightmare of psychological and physical degradation familiar to women and children — and certainly some men — who are abused over time. The text Rosalind B. Penfold (a pseudonym) uses to complement her graphics really gets at the dynamic of how abuse works to entrap a person — making her think that things are really her fault, that if she just tries harder things will get better, that what she stands to lose is too great a price to pay for leaving. And how, as a result, she loses all sense of herself as a person who can and should make decisions on her own behalf. I have read quite a few books over the years about abuse and listened to a number of experts talk about it — but this book packs an emotional wallop that reached me at a whole different level.



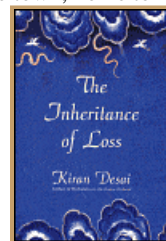
Dragonslippers would obviously be good to put in the hands of someone in an abusive relationship or someone who works with victims of abuse. But I also think it is an important book for people who wonder why "she just doesn't leave him," for people who are interested in better understanding a situation that almost certainly affects a friend, a co-worker, or a relative (even if that person isn't talking about it), or for people who simply want to understand a commonly misunderstood situation. Black Cat, an imprint of Grove/Atlantic, \$15 (080217020X).

The evocative cover of Louise Glück's new collection of poems, **Averno**, pictures two mountain peaks with mist and clouds rolling between the one in the foreground and the one in the back. At the bottom of the page is the suggestion of a circle composed of irregular splashes of red that abstractly resembles the beginning of a tunnel. This is Averno, a small crater lake in Italy thought by the ancient Romans to be the entrance to the underworld. The central metaphor of the collection comes from the myth of Persephone, daughter of the earth goddess Demeter, who was snatched from a field, raped, and taken to Hades by the god of that region to reign as queen and serve as consort. According to the myth, summer comes to the earth when Persephone is returned to her mother for the season before rejoining her paramour in the underworld for the rest of the year. The narrator of the poems conveys the many dimensions of her own experience and ideas provoked by this myth, including passion, death, marriage, aging, light and dark, hope and hopelessness. I've read it twice now, each time stunned by the complexity of the poet's mind and the austere beauty of her language. Farrar, Straus & Giroux, \$22 (0374107424).



Kiran Desai's new novel, **The Inheritance of Loss**, is terrific. It is set in — and just above — a town at the foot of one of the major Himalayan peaks, an extraordinarily

beautiful place that Desai describes in such detail of sight, sound, and smell that it is constantly present. The higher location, closer to the mountains, is home to those with money and education (and their servants) while the town below is where "the people" live and carry on a daily life of labor. The house above the town, home to three of the main characters — a retired judge, the judge's precocious granddaughter, and the judge's cook — was once grand but is now dilapidated; the placid town below is soon to be the site of bloody rebellion as idealistic, but easily corrupted, young Nepali men begin a revolutionary campaign to claim the land that they believe is rightfully theirs. Class hostility in this story is often the offspring of British colonialism in India as British-educated Indians, privileged by their work in the British power structure, are oblivious to the effect of their privilege on people without these advantages who either bow to the inevitable, try to access it for their children, or boil at the injustice. Another perspective Desai offers is that even the privileged pay a terribly high price: being stripped of family, community, geography, and culture to study abroad has, in the case of the judge, so maimed him psychologically and spiritually that his life is virtually empty except for his beloved dog. A counterpoint to the judge's story is that of the cook's son, off in the Promised Land of the United States loaded down by his father's dream of prosperity while living a brutal reality of slave-wage jobs and constant, alienating struggle – and desperately lonely for the father and countryside he loves. There are many harsh realities in this novel, the complexities of which the author handles deftly to make them intellectually and emotionally available to the reader. There are also great moments of humor, charm, and resolution that offset the pain of understanding some of the grim realities presented.

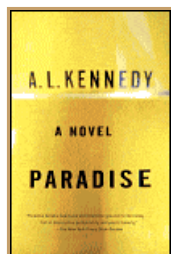
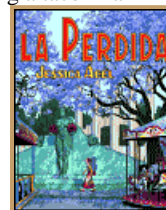


A word on the art of this wonderfully crafted novel: After I finished it, I re-read the first chapter and realized that all the major characters, themes, and events are introduced there and that the characters are already in the midst of situations that will be unraveled and described in detail as the narrative proceeds. The reader isn't aware of that artful construction, of course, unless she goes back and re-reads, but she does experience the effect of it as she reads on. I mention this as an example of the novel's elegance and as an example of one of the "invisible" ways great novels work. Atlantic Monthly, \$24 (0871139294).



Tish Hayes recommends.....

Jessica Abel's graphic novel, **La Perdida**, opens with Carla having a taco in a Mexican neighborhood in Chicago, and in the first few pages it presents such a feeling of nostalgia for something irrevocably lost that it is impossible to not want the full story. We flash back to Carla's arrival in Mexico City to search for her roots, for the Mexico of her dreams, and for an authentic life. Of course she falls madly in love with the city and doesn't leave, but her search for authenticity leaves her a little blind to the reality of the lives around her. I was so caught up in Carla's world though, that until her brother comes to visit bringing some outside perspective, I was just as enthralled as she. The journey from Mexico back to Chicago is riddled with beauty, really scary complications, and a lot of discovery. Jessica Abel's black and white panels are gorgeous and expressive, and she seamlessly works in historical, literary, and language lessons. This is a beautiful resonant story, and even if you've never read a graphic novel, I'd recommend taking a look at this one. Pantheon, \$19.95 (0375423656).



The first chapter of **Paradise** by A.L. Kennedy begins with our narrator, Hannah, in a hotel with no knowledge of why she's there, where she's been, or where she's going. We quickly realize that she's an alcoholic and are brought up-to-date by memories and flashbacks to discover that, in the timeline of the novel, the first chapter falls at the midpoint. I was a little discombobulated at first by the structure, but as I got to know Hannah, it fit perfectly. Memories are discovered and confessed by the most unlikely connections, so what seems like a really funny story may become the most heartbreaking thing you've ever heard. If Hannah is off balance, then so is the reader; what makes Kennedy's writing great is her ability to take this woman, who you would never want to know at all, let alone be friends with,

and make her so real that she feels a little like you. I read this book when it came out in hardcover, but Kennedy's images are so perfect and clear that the book still runs like a movie in my head. It still breaks my heart, and makes me laugh, and fills me with a longing that I think is Hannah's. Just out in paperback from Vintage. \$14 (1400079454).

Air (or Have Not Have) by Geoff Ryman just won the James Tiptree, Jr. Award, an annual literary prize for science fiction or fantasy that expands or explores our understanding of gender.

The small village Kizuldah, in the hills of Karzistan where men and women play out defined roles, farming is still the way of life, and technology is barely acknowledged, will be one of the first testing grounds for "Air." "Air" is an experimental communications system designed to connect everyone from New York to Tokyo to Kizuldah, but instead of using bandwidth it will be inside everyone's head. As you might imagine, the first test goes horribly awry: some people die, many more are terrified, and even more want to pretend that the test never happened. A village woman, Chung Mae, has the deepest exposure to Air and during the test is witness to the death of an old woman. These two things not only change her life, they connect her to the swiftly changing world. She quickly becomes both outcast and prophet, and eventually her neighbors recognize that it is she who will guide them into the modern world. *Air* is less futuristic tale than modern fable, and Ryman crystallizes the conflict between tradition and technology and suggests that the resolution can only be determined by the people living in the middle of it. *Air* continually surprised me: Every time I thought I knew where it was going, the landscape shifted just enough to keep me completely intrigued. St. Martin's, \$14.95 (0312261217).



The James Tiptree, Jr. Short List

Note: This is not the list from which the judges picked the winners. Rather, it is a list of books that the judges found interesting, relevant to the award, and worthy of note:

Aimee Bender, *Willful Creatures* (Doubleday, \$22.95)

Margo Lanagan, "Wooden Bride" (in *Black Juice*, Eos, \$15.99)

Vonda N. McIntyre, "Little Faces" (*SciFiction*, 02.23.05)

Wen Spencer, *A Brother's Price* (Roc, \$6.99)

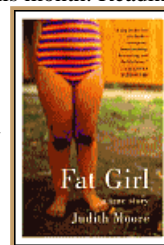
Wesley Stace, *Misfortune* (Little, Brown \$23.95; coming in paper from Back Bay Books in April \$15.95)

Mark W. Tiedemann, *Remains* (Benbella Books, \$15.95)



Pam Harcourt is reading...

I talked about Judith Moore's unflinching memoir **Fat Girl** a lot this month: Reading it I felt stripped of the emotional distance that I often feel with other writers, because it quickly became clear that she was not going to hold anything back or find anything too mortifying to tell. I loved the book for this. Her childhood is awful, and being fat is a part of the awfulness, but certainly not all of it, and the bad just keeps coming. But she is a great writer who makes all her experiences seem strange and new and charged; I felt like I was watching it happen. She writes devastatingly about fat oppression and her own body, mesmerizingly about food, and lovingly about one amazing uncle. I highly recommend this brilliant, unsparing memoir. Hudson Street Press, \$21.95 (1594630097).



Ariel Gore's **The Traveling Death and Resurrection Show** offers a warm story



about a Catholic-themed sideshow starring Frankka, a woman who can make her palms bleed at will. The dysfunctional family made up of the show's performers is threatened by fame and craziness when a newspaper does a story on Frankka's gift. Frankka breaks up the tale of her journey with stories about saints, like Brigid of Ireland (if you need a beer) and Therese of Lisieux (if you need a little love), and her stories are mesmerizing. I liked being with Frankka on her search for home; she's a flawed, searching heroine who is funny and mistrustful. I like the critique of organized religion and was surprised at how pretty and

fairytale-like she made some of the parts about Catholic mythology. HarperCollins, \$13.95 (0060854286).

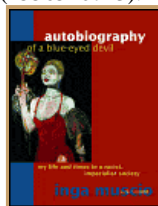
Best Bondage Erotica 2, edited by Alison Tyler, is awesome for having the variety of stories that it does. There are beginners, rodeo girls, a deconstructionist, a fancy Lady, a jailer, athletes, and many, many different power dynamics. The stories are funny, sad, and of course mostly super hot. But I appreciate having the funny and the sad and the complex in there — it makes the heat seem all the more real. I never felt like the stories were repeating themselves, and I loved it so much I also bought the first volume. Hopefully, Alison Tyler feels like editing a third, because her selections rock. Cleis Press, \$14.95 (1573442143).



Young Feminist Book Group...

WCF has been running a Young Feminist Book Group for a number of years. It's a strong and ongoing group, open to feminist women and men. The group has just changed its name to Intergenerational Feminist Book Group to reflect the fact that feminists of any age (and any gender, of course) are welcome to attend. The group focuses on various social issues facing feminists today: sexism, racism, militarism, and transgender and queer politics, and chooses a new list of books to read every six months or so. Here's their latest set of selections:

Assata: An Autobiography by Assata Shakur, Lawrence Hill Books, 1988, \$16.95 (1556520743).



Autobiography of a Blue-Eyed Devil: My Life and Times in a Racist, Imperialist Society by Inga Muscio, Seal Press, 2005, \$15.95 (1580051197).

This month's selection is Muscio's highly anticipated follow-up to *Cunt*, in which she argues that the "history" we learn in school is actually a marketing brand developed by white men.

The Female Man by Joanna Russ, Beacon Press/Bluestreak, 2000, \$15 (0807062995).

Feeding Anorexia: Gender and Power at a Treatment Center by Helen Gremillion, Duke University Press, 2003, \$22.95 (0822331209).

Telling Our Lives: Conversations on Solidarity and Difference, by Frida Kerner Furman and Elizabeth A. Kelly, Rowman & Littlefield, 2005, \$26.95 (0742541746).

Her Way: Young Women Remake the Sexual Revolution by Paula Kamen, Broadway Books, 2002, \$13.95 (0767910001).



For the Kids

Recommendations from Linda Bubon



For Very Young Children

I hope you already know the exuberant, primary-colored, joyful books by Todd Parr. He's told us all about Mommies, Daddies, and Families (there are *all* kinds!), and now he offers **The Grandma Book** and **The Grandpa Book**. Todd's books show

readers exactly what "inclusive" means: "Some grandmas live with a grandpa/ Some grandmas live with their friends." "Some grandpas put extra money in your piggy bank/ Some grandpas put extra marshmallows in your hot chocolate." Multiculturalism? Todd shows this by making some of his people purple or yellow or blue. People wear glasses, are often bald or have very silly orange hair. His books delight children, read aloud well, and include *all* our families. Little, Brown, both \$9.99 (*Grandma*: 0316058025, *Grandpa*: 0316058017).

Margaret Atwood, that irrepressible genius who writes in all genres, has also created several children's books; now Groundwood Books has had the good sense to publish a facsimile edition of her very first, **Up in the Tree**. It's a very simple story of two big-eyed kids who live happily in a tree until someone takes their ladder away. Then they have to find a way to get down, and, of course, back up again. The text is all rhyming — the rhythm and repetition are charming, not tedious (as I often find Seuss). Atwood wrote, illustrated, hand-lettered the text, and used only two colors ("to save on costs," she tells us in a little introduction). Delightful for two-year-olds and emerging readers — as well as adult Atwood fans. Groundwood Books, \$14.95 (0888997299).

Kevin Henkes is one of my favorite children's book creators, giving fresh meaning to words like "charming" and "adorable." Lilly, his best character and the star of *Lilly's Purple Plastic Purse* and *Julius – The Baby of the World*, is a girl (mouse) with a strong sense of identity. In his new book, **Lilly's Big Day**, Henkes tackles the flower girl issue: beloved teacher Mr. Slinger is getting married and Lilly is certain he will want her to be the flower girl – but as her mom and dad gently warn, there is a niece, Ginger, who is picked for the job. Realizing how much she wants to participate, Mr. S. suggests she be the flower girl's assistant, a most important job. And when Ginger freezes at the crucial moment, Lilly saves the day. A great book to prepare 4- to 7-year-olds for a wedding. Greenwillow, \$16.99 (0060742364).

For Older Children

Small Steps by Louis Sachar isn't as layered or history-rich as its predecessor, *Holes*, but it's a good read nonetheless and will no doubt make a good movie. The main character, Armpit (because he got stung by a scorpion there), is again digging holes, but this time he's making good money at it working for a landscaper. When one of his Camp Green Lake buddies suggests using his money to buy (and later scalp) tickets for a rock concert by teen phenom Kaira DeLeon, he reluctantly agrees. Of course they get caught, but it leads to a meeting between Armpit, his next-door-neighbor (a 10-year-old disabled girl), and Kaira backstage, and then the plot really gets rolling. Lots for pre-teens to discuss in this very contemporary novel. Delacorte, \$16.95 (0385733143).



We're crazy about Blue Balliett in Chicago because of the local setting for **Chasing Vermeer** and **The Wright 3**, but *Chasing Vermeer* also won just about every book award out there, so clearly she's loved everywhere. The three characters from the first book return in **The Wright 3** to help solve a mystery surrounding Frank Lloyd Wright's Robie House, and their whole class gets involved in helping to save it from being dismantled and sold in pieces to different museums. The book is deftly plotted, and it's beautifully illustrated (with clues embedded in the illustrations) by Brett Helquist. The subplot — how to get your two best friends to like each other — will appeal to middle-schoolers. I also liked how Balliett gets her readers to understand that a house can be a work of art. *Chasing Vermeer*, \$6.99 (0439372976); *The Wright 3*, \$16.99 (0439693675). Both from Scholastic.



That's it for this issue. I hope you've enjoyed it.

Please tell all your friends and colleagues about **More Books for Women** and our sister publications, **The Lesbian Edition** and **The Gay Men's Edition**, and encourage them to subscribe.

Or better yet — give a gift subscription. All three publications make great gifts for birthdays, graduations, retirement, or just about any occasion.

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

Yours in spreading the words,

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