



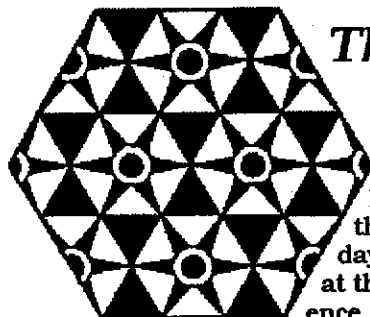
Women in Libraries

Volume 26, Number 3

The Feminist Task Force—25 Years

Spring 1997

Jewelle Gomez, Ginu Kumani lead Feminist Authors' Breakfast Panel:



The Patchwork Quilt of Feminism

Three speakers are scheduled to appear at the Feminist Task Force Feminist Authors' Breakfast, Sunday, June 29, 8:30 to 11, at the ALA Annual Conference, San Francisco.

Jewelle Gomez, known for her *Gilda Stories*, and Ginu Kamani, author of *Jungle Girl*, are featured. Joining them will be editor and author Margarita Donnelly, a founding editor of *Calyx*, Inc. All three women will present their ideas and work; a question-and-answer session will follow.

Gilda: model of power

Gomez has written and published numerous short stories, poems and essays, and is perhaps best known for her first novel, *The Gilda Stories* (Firebrand); this novel won two Lambda Literary Awards for fiction and science fiction. Born in Boston to poor parents, Gomez was raised mostly by her great-grandmother. She remembers the bar where her parents worked and used it as a locale in her novel.

"As a black person, a woman, and a lesbian," Gomez is concerned about these populations are to

perceive themselves in the future. "In most future fiction," she says, "we don't exist. I wanted to take what I think of as the feminist spirit and translate it into a reality."

Gomez has also published several other books: a collection of essays, *Forty-Three Septembers*; and three collections of poetry, *The Lipstick Papers*, *Flamingoes and Bears*, and *Oral Tradition* (all FireBrand). She's also the co-editor, with Eric Garber, of an anthology of fantasy fiction, *Sword of the Rainbow* (Alyson).

Her poetry, fiction and criticism have appeared in *Essence*, *MS*, *The New York Times*, *Gay Community News*, *Bridges*, *The Village Voice*, and *Belle Lettres*, and in anthologies *Home Girls*, *Skin Deep*, *Daughters Of Africa*, *Penguin Book of Lesbian Short Fiction*, and others.

She lectures widely and teaches fiction writing and popular culture. Currently, she is executive director of the Poetry Center and American Poetry Archive at San Francisco State University.

Wild woman of India

Ginu Kamani best known work to date is her short-story collection, *Jungle Girl* (Aunt Lute). In addition, she has published a long and impressive list of short stories, essays, and poems.

Continued, page 2

In this issue:

Feminist Authors' Breakfast: Patchwork Quilt of Feminism

Story page 1, ticket order form, back page

Conference news, pages 1-2

Calendar/Map insert to fold and carry, pages 5-6

Book review section, beginning on page 3

Breakfast, continued from page 1

Born in India, she immigrated to the United States while in her teens, later obtaining two degrees from the University of Colorado in Boulder.

In *Junglee Girl*, Kamani writes about the lives of many different women, describing lives both conventional and bizarre. "Junglee" is derived from a Sanskrit word, and is used in India to identify the wild and untamed. It is used as a term of derision or scorn, condemning women who are trying to be in any way independent. Kamani weaves together precarious, complex elements such as class, caste, gender, and eroticism into these tales. *Junglee Girl* is also published in the United Kingdom and India, and is slated for Hebrew and German translations.

Kamani's poems, essays, and short stories have been included in several anthologies, including *On a Bed of Rice: An Asian American Erotic Feast*, *Seven Hundred Kisses: A Yellow Silk Book of Erotic Writing*, and *Herotica 5* (forthcoming); and in periodicals *au Jus: the journal of eatn' drinkn' & screwn' 'round*, *The Bay Guardian Literary Supplement*, *India Currents Magazine*, and *Zyzyva*, to name a few.

Kamani speaks six languages and has worked editing films in India, tutoring English as a second language, and teaching creative writing. For the coming year, she has been appointed Writer in Residence at Mills College, a women's college in Oakland, California.

The editor's viewpoint

Margarita Donnelly, managing editor and one of the founding editors of Calyx, will talk about some of the anthologies she has edited, and discuss her experiences as one of 54 editors at Calyx.

Her major projects include the anthologies, *The Forbidden Stitch: An Asian American Women's Anthology*, which won an American Book Award in 1990, *Florilegia*, and *Women and Aging: An Anthology by Women*.

Donnelly also participated in the planning stages on newly-released *Present Tense: Writing and art by Young Women*. "We envisioned the younger women's anthology project [a]s part of empowering the younger women on staff and involved with CALYX to begin to take the reins," she says. "It has also given voice to younger women writers and artists." She notes how different the work is "from the work by my peers and my generation and how it truly reflects changes that have taken place over the last two decades since we started Calyx."

Donnelly was born in Caracas, Venezuela, and has travelled extensively. She has been recognized both nationally and locally for her achievements in publishing and research, and is also a published poet.

How to buy tickets

A ticket coupon is included on the back page of the newsletter. For more information, e-mail d_granger@convene.com or mtainton@wtamu.edu, or write Madeleine Tainton, Breakfast Coordinator, PO. Box 736, Canyon, TX 79016.

—M. Tainton

Program to be on HIV info

"HIV/AIDS Information for Women: From the Archive to the Street," from 9:30-12:30 on Monday, June 30 is the Women's Studies Section program. Panelists will address the ways information on HIV is collected, disseminated, received, and used.

Will Walker, the original project archivist for the AIDS History Project, plans to talk about the challenge of collecting material on such a comparatively new area and describe his methodology. Cristina Campbell, librarian of Berkeley's Public Health Library discusses working in a research library that also works closely with local health departments.

Appearing for other public services is Irma Torres, HIV counselor and case manager at SF's Lyon-Martin Women's Health Services and public speaker and educator. Ellen Brody, History and Film Studies Librarian at University of California, Irvine, will moderate.

The program is to conclude with an educational performance art piece by The Safer Sex Sluts. FTF, GLBT, and SRRT cosponsor.



Women in Libraries

<http://darkwing.uoregon.edu/~holman/FTF/>

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Summer reading for children

Trying to fit in

Sreenivasan, Jyotsna. *Aruna's Journeys*. St. Louis, MO: Smooth Stone Press, 1997. Paper, ISBN 0-9619401-7-4, \$6.95.

Aruna is an eleven-year-old girl who was born in India, but raised in Ohio. She has just moved to a new town, new school and new friends. She has determinedly resisted being classified as Indian, because she doesn't want to be considered "different." In this story she has to come to terms with the changes in her life, and spend a summer in India with relatives and a culture she barely remembers.

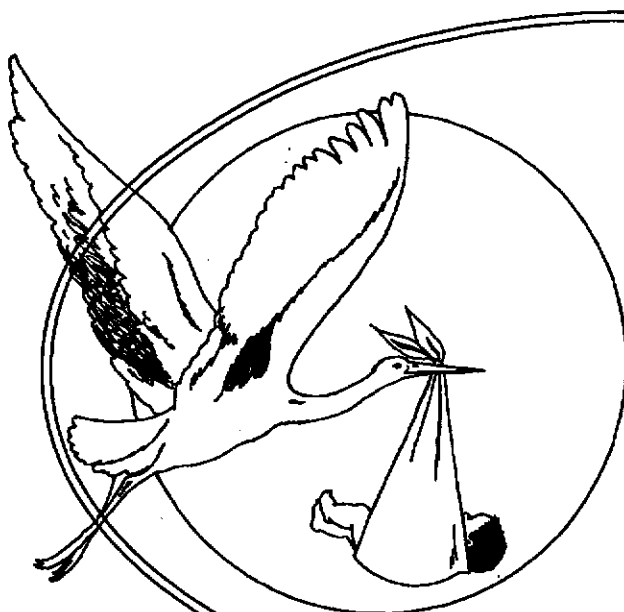
As a study of the implications of multiculturalism on a personal level, this is a worthwhile book. Aruna begins by rejecting her Indian heritage, while her mother wants her to avoid being too North American. During her time in India Aruna learns to appreciate many aspects of that culture, while realizing that not all Indians fit her stereotypes of them, any more than all her North American acquaintances are the same. The author imparts much information about Indian culture and customs in the course of the story, and Aruna's growth into a more self-assured, thoughtful person is satisfying.

The book is written for a 6th to 9th grade reading level. Its major flaw, however, may make it less than popular among readers of that age. Young people expect something to happen, some sort of crisis to occur. Aruna grows in wisdom, but does not get into and out of any "situation." At one point, it looks as if she has inadvertently given her mother to understand she wants to live in India, and her mother will then expect her to, which could be the tension the novel needs. However, she simply tells her mother she has decided not to, and the situation is over.

Many aspects of this book are useful. It contains interesting information, has a glossary of Indian terms, has some engaging characters (such as Aruna's feminist Indian aunt) and is an enjoyable read. Although the book may not catch on as pleasure reading, it would be very useful in a classroom situation, or for discussion groups among young people. For this reason, it is recommended for libraries which collect multicultural teaching resources.

—K. Thompson

Book reviews continued, page 4



Announcing:

A new feminist!

Dorothy Granger introduces Karen Elizabeth, born November, 1996. Karen will be attending her first ALA conference this summer.

Welcome, Karen—

We can't wait to meet you!

Book Review Section



Stories, poetry, and more, for your summer reading

Light or heavy—your choice

My mom, the protestor

Bache, Elyn. *The Activist's Daughter*. Duluth, MN: Spinsters Ink, 1997.

Paper, ISBN 1-883523-18-4, \$10.95.

This kind of book is a treat to review. Set in 1963, it is the story of Beryl Rosinsky, eighteen-year-old daughter of radical Jewish parents. Her father, an architect blacklisted during the McCarthy hearings, is now a dry cleaner, and her mother, a passionate Civil Rights activist.

Beryl sees her mother's activism through the prism of a young adult: her mother's activities are a source of embarrassment to her. She perceives her mother as putting her considerable energies into civil rights work (an abstract to Beryl, still) rather than into her own family. More than anything, Beryl wants to have a mother who is "normal," like those of her peers. She wants to be left alone to live her life without worrying about the impact of each of her actions on the whole world, and she believes that her mother cares more about the rights of others than about her own daughters.

With her mother away on a civil rights trip into the deep south, Beryl enrolls at the University of North Carolina in Chapel Hill, a move clearly opposed to her mother's values and kept secret from her. Beryl's move to claim her own life brings her unexpectedly face-to-face with issues she'd previously seen as her mother's: the ugliness of racial bigotry, anti-Semitism, the double standard of separate rules for women and men students, the illegality of abortion. Beryl discovers that much of what she takes for granted at home is unthinkable to her fundamentalist-Christian, southern roommates.

In telling the story of Beryl's resistance to, and ultimate growth into, her own activism, Bache's novel is engaging and believable; drawing, as she must have, on her own experiences in Chapel Hill in the early 1960's, Bache has painted a clear portrait of life in a southern college town during the Civil

Rights movement. Beryl's growth is natural and credible, based solidly in her character and experiences. A compelling story, highly recommended.

—K. Gerhard

Exploring life and the world

Hoppenbrouwers, Toke. *Autumn Sea*. Portland, ME: Astarte Shell Press, 1996. Paper, ISBN 1-885349-04-1, \$12.95.

Descriptions of journeys criss-cross the pages of this story of women. Told in first person, as conversation and in flashback, the narrator's story meshes the events of her past with the transformation she experiences in the present. The journey of discovery, evolving as life unfolds, is recalled in muted, understated tones in *Autumn sea*, and it is a journey well worth taking.

After ending her romantic relationship with Ene, begun years ago in the Netherlands and concluded in the US, the narrator falls in love with an African-American woman, Lesly. Together they explore their similarities—independence, fear of closeness, and straightforwardness of speech—and learn about their differences, greater than the colors of their skins.

The narrator, with Lesly, returns to her homeland to visit her aging parents. Often-painful memories assert themselves, and the narrator is forced to confront and redefine her patterns of relating to her parents to and Ene. As the narrator and Lesly journey onward to India and the Middle East, their relationship shifts, and further self-knowledge and growth are the result.

Though the story is told from a lesbian viewpoint, there is much here to appeal to a wider audience. Developing and changing relationships, whether between friends, lovers, or mother and daughter, are universal themes that are delicately drawn in the narrator's tale. Often what is left unstated is as important as the written words, making reading this book a voyage of discovery in itself.

—L. Greene

Review section continued, page 7

Women in Libraries



- Aperto—Italian
1434 18th St., at Connecticut, 5-9 p.m.
- Blowfish—Japanese
2170 Bryant, at 20th, 5-10:30 p.m.
- Eliza's—Light Chinese and Mandarin
1457 18th St., at Connecticut, Noon-10 p.m.
- Hamburger Mary's—Funky, loud, cheap
1582 Folsom, at 12th, 10 a.m.-1 a.m.
- Val 21—California Vegetarian
995 Valencia, at 21st, 5:30-10 p.m.
- Universal Cafe—California Grill
2814 19th Street, near Bryant, 5:30-9:30 p.m.



For fun, in Aunt Lute's
neighborhood

SF Restaurants

Feminist Authors' Breakfast

"Patchwork Quilt of Feminism"

Sunday, June 29, 8:30—11 a.m.,

Holiday Inn Union Square, Sutter I, II, III.

Tickets \$20 at ALA's Meal Ticket Counter.

Scheduled to join us for breakfast:

- **Ginu Kamani**, author of *Junglee Girl* (Aunt Lute, publisher), immigrated from India as a teenager. The word *junglee*, from the Sanskrit root, is used in India to describe a wild and uncontrollable woman, collection of 11 short stories. She's a writer and poet and will be Writer in Residence at Mills College, Oakland, for the coming academic year. Those who have heard her speak find her entertaining and interesting.

- **Jewelle Gomez**, author of *The Gilda Stories* and *43 Septembers*, shares her view of the minority experience in America. A lesbian, she grew up poor, and depicts strong women in her works. She is reputed to be a dynamic and entertaining speaker.

- **Margarita Donnelly**, one of the founding editors of *CALYX*, currently managing editor, has seen several books to publication, including *Forbidden Stitch: Asian American Women's Writing*, *Women and Aging*, and *Florlegia*.

After their presentations, the three authors will participate in a brief Q&A session.

A Celebration for Women's Night Out

Aunt Lute Books, Feminist Bookstore News, and the Women's Presses Library Project invite feminist librarians to a special reception in our offices:

Sunday, June 29, 1997, 6-8 pm
2180 Bryant Street, 415-826-1300

Hors-d'oeuvres, drinks, and book signing, plus Patricia Holt discussing censorship in publishing, great SF feminist publishers, and authors.

Make an evening of it: come for the party, the program,...And, of course, to network, meet feminist publishers and writers, and have a good time.

Come to Aunt Lute's offices in an lovingly renovated warehouse with an inviting atmosphere, where South of Market meets the Mission. Look for an old red brick building on the corner of 20th and Bryant streets. We're a quick cab ride, about \$6 including tip, from the Moscone Center, or a 7-block walk from the 24th Street BART station. The building is wheelchair accessible.

Sponsored by the Women's Presses Library Project and its numerous San Francisco members, hosted by Aunt Lute Books and the Feminist Bookstore News.

This is a celebration!

Meeting Schedule: Confirm all dates and times and check locations in the ALA Annual Conference Program.

Saturday, June 28

- 9:30 a.m.—12:30 p.m., SRRT Action Council. Hilton-Continental, Ballroom 5
 - **All Task Force, 9:30—11 a.m., including Feminist Task Force**
(Check conference program for other FTF meetings.)
 - Action Council I, 11 a.m.—12:30 p.m.

Sunday, June 29

- 8:30 —11:00 a.m., **Feminist Task Force Feminist Authors' Breakfast**
The Patchwork Quilt of Feminism. Holiday Inn Union Square, Sutter I-III.
See reverse and *Women in Libraries* page 1 for details.
- 9:30 a.m.—12:30 p.m., SRRT General Membership Meeting, Marriott-Sierra, Suite J
- 6:00—8:00 p.m., **Women's Night Out.** Special reception at Aunt Lute Books.
Details on reverse.

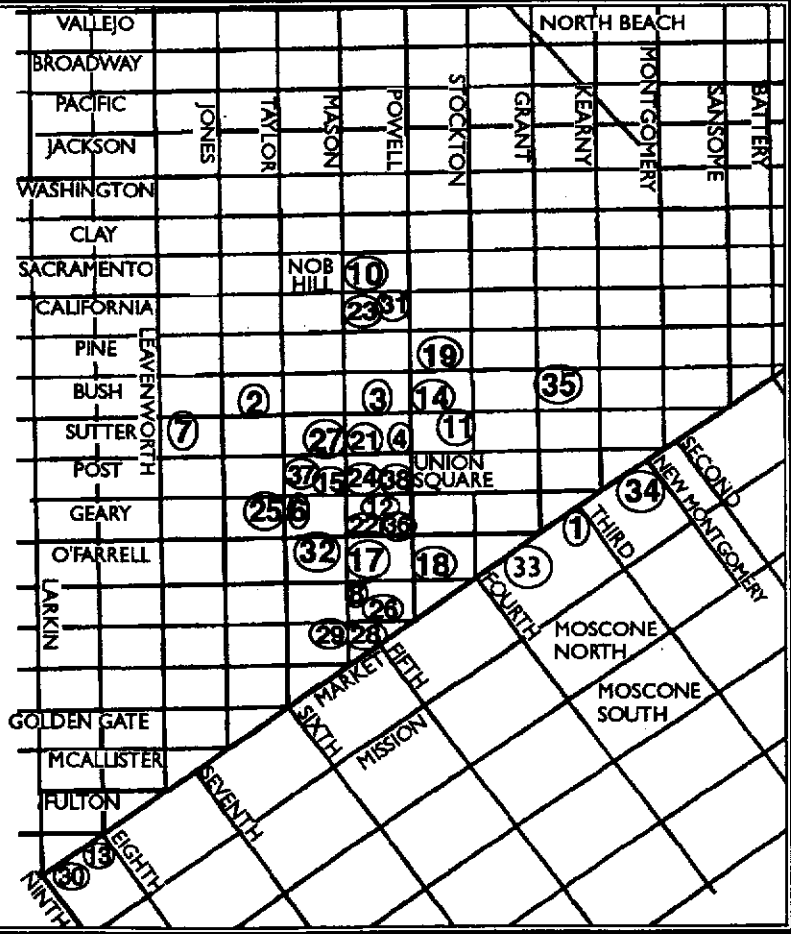
Monday, June 30

- 9:30 a.m.—12:30 p.m, WSS Program, HIV/AIDS Information for Women: From the Archive to the Street. Panelists discuss how information on HIV is collected, disseminated, received and used. Program concludes with performance art by SF group, the Safer Sex Sluts. Co-sponsored by SRRT, **Feminist Task Force**, and GLBIF.
- 2:00—4:00 p.m., Action Council II, San Francisco Hilton, Union Square 23 and 24
- 6:00—9:00 p.m., Alternatives in Print Free Speech Buffet. Meet small press and alternative publishers from the Bay area. Browse local books, magazines, comics and zines from this diverse cultural metropolis. Relaxed atmosphere. Free food. Cash bar. Latino-Hispanic Community Meeting Room, SFPL, lower level, Grove Street and Hyde at BART stop. Co-sponsored by the SFPL Librarians' Guild (SEIU). Co-sponsored by eleven ALA and affiliated units.

LEGEND

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|-------------------------------|-----------------------------------|
| 1. ANA Hotel | 22. King George Hotel |
| 2. Best Western Canterbury | 23. Mark Hopkins Hotel |
| 3. Cartwright | 24. Maxwell Hotel |
| 4. Chancellor Hotel | 25. Monaco |
| 6. Cliff Hotel | 26. Monticello Inn |
| 7. Commodore | 27. Pan Pacific |
| 8. Crowne Plaza Parc 55 | 28. Powell |
| 10. Fairmont | 29. Powell West |
| 11. Grand Hyatt | 30. Ramada Civic Center |
| 12. Handlery | 31. Renaissance Stanford Court |
| 13. Holiday Inn Civic Center | 32. San Francisco Hilton & Towers |
| 14. Holiday Inn Union Square | 33. San Francisco Marriott (HQ) |
| 15. Hotel Diva | 34. Sheraton Palace Hotel |
| 17. Hotel Nikko | 35. Tricon |
| 18. Hotel Union Square | 36. Villa Florence |
| 19. Hotel Vintage Court | 37. Warwick Regis |
| 20. Hotel Regency Embarcadero | 38. Westin St. Francis |
| 21. Kensington Park Hotel | |

San Francisco Hotel Guide



Book Review Section

Journalist stirs up murder

McDermid, Val. *Deadline for Murder*. Duluth, MN: Spinsters Ink, 1997. Paper, ISBN 1-883523-17-6, \$10.95.

This, the third Lindsay Gordon mystery, is set in the sleuth's native Scotland. After her last adventure, Lindsay left her job as a journalist and fled to Italy to wait out the chaos she began by publishing an article. As a welcome back, she learns, in the same evening, that her lover is with someone else, an ex-lover has been murdered, and a colleague has been accused of the murder.

The accused woman, Jackie Mitchell, believes that Lindsay is the only person who can prove her innocence. Reluctantly, Lindsay agrees to use her sleuthing skills to look into the matter, although the case is open and shut, according to the police. Since all evidence seems to lead to Jackie, pursuit of other lines of enquiry have been cursory. Lindsay's only lead is a faint fingerprint left on a glass, belonging neither to the victim nor the accused. The plot twists and turns. There is a burglary in a flat in the victim's building, adding more questions. Is there a connection between the robbery and the murder?

As Lindsay gathers more details on the life and death of the murdered woman, Alison Maxwell, she brings to light an intriguing, colorful character. Alison was a talented journalist who seemed to make a sport of seducing people, keeping a detailed journal of her conquests. She ended many of her affairs herself, but if her partner initiated the break-up, Alison proved manipulative and cruel. She destroyed anyone who crossed her: careers, relationships, entire lives were ruined at her hands. It is not surprising that Lindsay finds several people who have reason to want Alison dead.

McDermid has an engaging style. The intricate, twisting plot makes the book difficult to put down. Though the suspect is familiar from the previous Lindsay Gordon mystery, this story is markedly different from the other. The characters are multi-dimensional, realistic and interesting. Val McDermid, who also writes the Kate Brannigan mystery series, is an author mystery fans should not miss. —B. Jedlicka

Two women, different and alike

Stone, Beatrice. *Entwined*. Chicago: Third Side Press, 1995. Paper, ISBN 1-879427-21-4, \$10.95.

Why won't Lottie Mower speak? Intrigued by the 77-year-old woman, Charly wants to find the answer. But simple curiosity doesn't explain why Charly begins to dream about Lottie's life. Then comes the question of why Charly has such a bond with Charlotte (Lottie) Mower. Between these dreams and the research that Charly does with her lover

Spring 1997

Shay, the story of a woman who has been in mental hospitals and nursing homes for more than 50 years begins to unfold.

Combined in this story are a young woman's love for her teacher, physical abuse from her father, and an escape to a loveless marriage. The real tragedy of the book is that it is based on a true story, perhaps many true stories of those women who loved women in the earlier twentieth century.

Despite the halting writing in places and the implausible occurrences that lead to the discovery of Lottie's past, the novel takes a valuable place in women's history, portraying their helplessness before the law and their struggles to live satisfying lives. The contrast between the young couple and the two older women separated for most of their lives shows the progress made during the last 50 years and may encourage the struggle for women's independence to continue. —N. Ward

Murder underwater

Mildon, Marsha. *Fighting for Air: a Cal Meredith Mystery*. Norwich, VT: New Victoria, 1995. Paper, ISBN 0-934678-69-3, \$10.95.

Through numerous twists and turns, Marsha Mildon intricately weaves this tale of mystery and murder. Detective Calliope Meredith, known as Cal, becomes involved with Jay Campbell, the scuba instructor who also happens to be the prime suspect in the drowning death of a student on his first open-water dive. While the title of this mystery reflects the watery death of the student, it is also symbolic of the struggle within Cal herself. Her affair with Jay is her first involvement since the death of her lover, Liz, and she forcibly struggles for air like someone drowning: "My heart kept pounding like a jack hammer and I couldn't seem to get enough oxygen." Cal works through her own demons in this novel while sifting out the facts and occurrences which lead up to the murder.

Mildon constantly keeps the reader guessing throughout *Fighting*. Her ability to throw the reader off the track proves her ability as a mystery writer. While providing intricate motives for several possible suspects, she explores powerful relationships among the characters; the reader's mind must be quick to follow the pulsing vein of this mystery. —S. Voeller

Amazon Jungle fantasy adventure

Wolman, Karen Dale. *Rites of first blood*. San Diego, CA: Paradigm, 1995. Paper, ISBN 1-882587-08-1, \$10.95.

Imagine yourself living with a matriarchal hunting and gathering tribe after being wounded in the Amazon Jungle! This is exactly what happens to Sara Hansen, a New York lesbian and doctor, who is researching a plant that helps boost the immune

Book Review Section

system against AIDS. All is not copacetic, however: becoming lovers with Olani, the tribal shaman, sets Sara up against the chief's daughter who challenges Olani's influence over the tribe. Should Sara stay with the tribe—and endanger Olani's position—or continue the scientific research that means so much to her?

With a plausible premise, interesting characterization, and detailed descriptions, *First blood* is a good first novel, occasionally funny and sometimes sexy. Fast-moving and exciting, this makes good reading for a vacation or perhaps those late nights after work. The unique approach sets it apart from typical lesbian fare and sends one into a part-fantasy, part-technical world. —N. Ward

Woman in chains

Blake, Lillie Devereux. *Fettered for Life, or, Lord and Master: a Story of Today*. New York: Feminist Press, 1997. Cloth, ISBN 1-55861-155-X, \$45.00; paper, ISBN 1-55861-155-X, \$18.95.

Fettered for life is a new edition of a book originally published in 1874 and tells the story of a young woman who flees her repressive childhood home to seek her fortune in New York City. It is melodrama, with danger at every turn, plot twists and surprises. It is a polemical novel, asserting that women are not basically different from men. It is a social commentary, showing the plight of women tyrannized by men, with society's approval. It is not boring. It is not dated. And, unfortunately, most of the characters and their situations could appear in stories of the present day and we would recognize them perfectly.

The protagonist, Laura, finds trouble and a friend in the city the first night she is there. Early we meet Judge Swinton, a womanizing politician; Frank, a kind and perceptive journalist; and Dr. D'Arcy, a female physician who becomes Laura's mentor. As the story progresses we meet women abused by their husbands, young women whose only thoughts are their looks and marriage, schoolgirls who are taught to limit their ambitions to "womanly pursuits," autocratic men, and the rare loving, equal couple. In this world, women encounter sexism on the job (when they can land a job), men are the bosses in organizations where women do all the work, women are revered as innately "good," and this goodness somehow disqualifies them from holding political office. We also find, with Laura, a prospective husband for her. While he seems the best she can do, he is nevertheless unwilling to impart to her enough respect to allow her to live her life "unfettered" by his suspicions, and more willing to exile himself than to accept her word over that of a man he detests.

In addition to the novel, this edition, currently the only edition in print, contains a substantial afterword with notes, written by Grace Farrell, who also resurrected the novel and brought it to publishable form. The afterword offers a perspective on the era which is useful for the contemplation of the tale. Especially interesting is her discussion of the split in the early feminist movement between those who considered women basically different from men, more spiritual and moral, and those who saw the differences as a societal construct. Some of her interpretations may be more or less acceptable to any individual reader, such as the implication that "woman's sphere" of helping and sacrificing should be abandoned rather than that "man's sphere" of self-centered action should be tempered. However, Farrell's essay is well presented and her notes offer a good beginning bibliography to the study of the issues involved.

One difficulty this novel presents is its appearance. It was "offset directly from copies of the original edition," and the type is rather curvy and broken. While this gives it an aged look, doubtless useful to scholarly readers, for the reader more interested in the story than in historical authenticity of the look, modern type might be a better choice.

Appearance quibbles aside, this book is absolutely appropriate for any public library collection, and essential for any academic library. It should be useful in women's studies courses, classes on women writers, and as a bonus is excellent entertainment for those who enjoy a bit of historical fiction. —K. Thompson

Modern lesbians' world explored

Cummings, Martha Clark. *Mono Lake Stories*. Monterey, CA: Rowborge Press, 1995. Paper, ISBN 0-9646201-2-X, \$8.95.

In *Mono Lake Stories*, the ASTRAEA Lesbian Writers Fund Award Winner, Martha Clark Cummings, portrays the world of contemporary lesbians through a collection of nine short stories. In "An incident," a college professor committed to another woman, with two children and a ten-year relationship, is terrified of being unjustly accused of sexual harassment by a young female student. In "Mono Lake," a young heroin addict, trapped in a small town outside Las Vegas, works as a cleaning woman while longing for the local coffee shop waitress. In these stories filled with danger and possibilities, Cummings reveals the lives of lesbians with compassion. Although Cummings' writing style is somewhat amateurish, she has a lesson to teach us all about women surviving and loving in a world defined by men. This novel is the first from Rowborge, a new lesbian press. —S. Koochek

Asian women meet North America

Rafiq, Fauzia, ed. *Aurat Durbar: Writings by Women of South Asian Origin*. Toronto: Second Story Press, 1995. Paper, ISBN 0-929005-70-8, \$14.95.

We are bringing these flowers
In remembrance of all the women who had died
In all the wars that men have fought
We weep
We do not forget
And as we remember, we dedicate ourselves
To making a new world where we can all live free.

The volume's dedication above is taken from graffiti in Bangalore, India in May 1990 and explains the intent of the many authors. They live in Canada, the United States, Sri Lanka, Pakistan, and India, and were born in these countries, Africa, and the Caribbean. Each woman reveals the way she is rebelling or resisting and changing her part of the world.

Sunera Thobani writes of the violence against women, a war, she emphasizes, is declared, though often unacknowledged:

a war on women
they say
and claim
it is a war undeclared
women know otherwise...
prisoners of war
within the confines of our own
homes lives hearts
they tell us
it is undeclared,

This violence against women continues, Ramabai Espinet believes, because women's bodies are not our own. In "Dare to Bare," she addresses her audience in Caribbean Creole English, telling us the reason women cannot go topless is not because breasts are indecent (after all, men can shed their shirts on a hot day without a second thought), but because "Man have a stake in breast-commerce, yuh hear. They done seize woman breast and then go and sell it to other man in strip joint, in advertising, 'cheesecake' and ting...Man don't like woman to give away she body for free...she must sell sheself under the tradegrounds them set up already."

In "Making of a Cultural Schizophrenic," the hopes and dreams of a new country are colored by the racism Sherazad Jamal's family discovers when they immigrate to Canada. She is told that she will have to repeat a year in school based on her age, not her ability.

they do not want to see past my face
are all coloured immigrants considered stupid
until proven intelligent?

In a volume of pain and passion, each woman tells of her hopes and disappointments, of her struggle to be seen as an individual with faults to overcome and talents to share and celebrate. Syeda Nuzhat Siddiqui reminds us in "To the Human Race,"

we are still of the one
human clan

—P. Crossland

Wild goose chase goes worldwide

Kreuter, Katherine E. *Fool Me Once: a Paige Taylor Mystery*. Northboro, MA: Madwoman Press, 1994. Paper, ISBN 0-9630822-8-0, \$9.95.

Paige Taylor writes mysteries, solves them, and, Oh, does she travel! From the comfortable home she shares with her lover, she pursues her cases all over the planet. Not a bad life—until it gets dangerous. In this case, her dentist's wife leaves him, taking all the cash, including half a million in gold. So Paige gets some dental work taken care of and sets off in pursuit. The absconding wife's trail is suspiciously easy to follow, from Hong Kong to remote villages, deeper and deeper into the Chinese interior. An accidental death, a murder during a robbery, and another disappearance all begin to intertwine as Paige traces them to their roots. The story is fun and interesting, with just enough romance to keep it sparkling.

—M. Tainton

Finding a chosen family

Kanter, Lynn. *On Lill Street*. Chicago: Third Side Press, 1992. Paper, ISBN 1-879427-07-9, \$10.95.

From a vantage point in the future, Margaret looks back on an earlier period in her life. In her mid-20's, lesbian-feminist writer Margaret moves to a shared house on Lill Street. She is full of political rigor and philosophical purpose, but lacking deep emotional connections, especially now that her parents have disowned her. She perceives joy and success as inimical to feminism, as potential distractions.

The house on Lill Street provides Margaret with a chosen family and, through that family of friends, a bridge to a fuller emotional life. Her housemates have been friends with one another from early in their lives. Margaret's relationships with her housemates and theirs with one another allow Margaret to learn to play and to recognize the importance of joy, without sacrificing her purpose in life.

—K. Gerhard

Book Review Section

Lost stories found

Forman, Frieda, Ethel Raicus, et al, eds. *Found Treasures: Stories by Yiddish Women Writers*. Toronto, Canada: Second Story Press, 1994. Paper, ISBN 0-929995-53-8, \$19.95 Canada, \$16.95 US.

In this loving presentation of 24 stories translated from Yiddish, a group of Jewish feminists has undertaken the opus of exploring their own heritage. "It became the aim of our study group, our *leyenkrayz*, to find and read the original works by these women," they say; the works referred to are writings, destroyed by Nazis, by their mothers and grandmothers who spoke and read Yiddish. To aid us in understanding these writers' experiences, the editors include photographs, brief biographies, and a glossary of Yiddish terminology.

In the story "The new world," Esther Singer Kreitman imagines her birth, pointing out that males were far more valued in the Hasidic community in which she was raised than were females. She relates the experience as one she had been looking forward to until she overhears the conversations of her parents and grandparents and the disappointment they express over her gender.

"The Zogerin" describes the life of the woman selected to read the prayers for women during religious services; this traditional role is not followed today. She is the speaker, the one who not only reads the prayers but spends her time entreating God on behalf of the women in the community. She prays for serious problems, such as a child's illness, and for more frivolous things like financial aid to those whom fortune has already smiled upon. The portrait of this woman is not of a gentle, pious soul but of a woman taken for granted by her community, just beyond starving. She is frustrated and embittered by a life spent in prayers for others.

The longest piece is "Edgia's Revenge," told from the unique perspective of a woman who served as a kapo, an inmate put in charge of fellow prisoners by the Nazis, in Auschwitz. Chava Rosenfarb describes Rella as a nineteen-year-old girl from a cultured middle-class family who has lost everyone she cares about to the crematorium. She points out that

...[I]t is false to think that not everyone could have been a kapo. It is a lie. In that world from which I miraculously escaped, every single person had the potential to be a brute, a thug, a murderer. When it comes to fighting for one's own life, moral laws cease to exist.

This volume speaks of history and experience almost lost to Yiddish-speaking people. The editors, realizing that the experiences of their foremothers had been left out of history books, have rectified the omission in this volume. In tracking down, translating, and editing these stories, for themselves and for others who will grow by reading them, they have made a valuable contribution. —P. Crossland

Can't we be friends?

Miner, Valerie. *Winter's Edge*. New York: Feminist Press, 1996. Paper, ISBN 1-55861-150-9, \$10.95. Originally published in 1985 by Crossing Press.

Miner, with skill and insight, portrays the friendship of two working-class women, one 65, the other 70, and the impact that a local political election has on their thirty-year friendship and their community. Chrissie MacInnes is an obdurate activist working as a waitress, Margaret Sawyer is a news clerk, gentle, long suffering, and declining to be involved in local politics.

Their friendship starts soon after Margaret's husband leaves her. "Chrissie had been cold at first, as only the Scots can be. Checking her out, with such scrutiny that Margaret sometimes worried there might be grime beneath her fingernails." Once Chrissie gives her friendship, "Margaret began to wonder if Chrissie's heart had any bounds." She helps Margaret raise her children and is her mainstay when her son dies in Viet Nam.

Chrissie extends the same loyalty to Marissa Washington, her candidate for San Francisco supervisor. She meets the young black woman at a civil rights rally and "right away she knew Marissa was a smart woman," a law school graduate who remains in her childhood neighborhood, determined to improve conditions. Chrissie's politics stem from her personal experiences of poverty and classism. She has yearned to come to America but harbors no illusions about the land of plenty. "In the land of milk and honey you had to beware of sweets, had to check what they were laced with."

Margaret on the other hand, "felt like she didn't know a soul. She didn't want to. She simply wanted to be back in her apartment, resting against a friendly pillow." Despite her philosophy of working things out between individuals, Margaret is moved to action when Chrissie's life is threatened because of a campaign-finance scandal. Although on the surface Margaret is a lady living in genteel poverty, Miner adds depth by imbuing her with a fine eye for detail and an understated sexuality. It is she who discovers the payoff scheme.

Miner's characters are designed with beautiful detail. She does not spare them the inconvenience of old age, nor does she gloss over the conditions in which they live. The Murphy bed, the keepsakes from another life which decorate Margaret's apartment illustrate her meager resources. Both women work for a living, not for camaraderie. They are complex women who never lose their dignity, a dignity Miner ascribes to them as their natural right, along with their independence and interdependence. Their diverse views of the world complement each other; Chrissie is constantly imploring Margaret to look at the broad picture, Margaret in her turn

Book Review Section

directs Chrissie to more immediate, personal relationships. Miner reminds us that the same elements that threatened the disenfranchised in the 1970's are present in the 1990's: poverty, racism, and political greed. Through her characters we see that it is only as through unity these people have a voice, not forgetting their individual stories. —P. Crossland

Power, danger, and love

D'Arnuk, Nanisi Barrett. *Outside In*. Norwich, VT: New Victoria, 1996. Paper, ISBN 0-934678-75-8, \$10.95.

As Nanisi Barrett D'Arnuk's first novel opens, Cameron Andrew steps from a prison transport van into her new life at the Hagerville State Correctional Facility for Women. Months of intensive skill and psychological training prepared Detective Sergeant Andrews for this experience— a three year prison sentence for dealing drugs. D'Arnuk's heroine is 30, smart, and well-educated; she has joined the Baltimore Police Force after a distinguished stint with the CIA. Four years out of a relationship, Cam is restless—something is missing, and she wonders when her education and achievements are going to mean something.

Acting on a casual remark made by the agent in charge of a big bust, Cam makes an appointment at Agency headquarters and expresses her willingness to return to work for the CIA.

The assignment is "deep cover," and her pre-assignment training is a novel in itself. Her trainers are Charlie, who batters her with confrontational drills, Maggie, the psychiatrist, who probes the inner self in her role as "controller" for the agent, and Michael, a seductive female, who initiates Cam into the martial arts by day and the rituals of S/M sex by night.

Once inside the prison, the drama takes off as Cam sets about to discover how drugs infiltrate this setting and who makes that possible. As a backdrop to her close calls with those in charge of this drug operation, we know, as does our heroine, that the agent who worked on this case before her lost her life in the process.

Outside in is a compelling study of all sorts of power relationships: law enforcement/criminal, teacher/student, authority/rank-and-file, and of course, lover/lover. The issue of control and its relationship to attraction and affiliation are explored while this gripping and entertaining story unfolds.

—R. McAndrew

A hard country life in Kentucky

Kelley, Edith Summers. *Weeds*. New York: The Feminist Press, 1996. Paper, ISBN 1-55861-154-1, \$15.95.

Every now and then I encounter a book that makes me want to grab friends by the lapels and insist that they stop everything they are doing, sit down and read it. Then report back to me. And if they don't like the book, their reaction is likely to color my judgment of them forevermore. Dimwits. So it is with Edith Summers Kelley's poignant novel *Weeds*. *Weeds* was published originally by Harcourt, Brace in 1923. Despite favorable reviews, it sold poorly and soon went out of print. It remained yet another lost novel by a woman until reissued by Southern Illinois University Press in 1972; the first Feminist Press edition followed in 1982. Kelley was a writer of extraordinary gifts. *Weeds* has some of the fullest descriptions, in literature, that I've ever read of the monotonous, back-breaking work of poor rural women. Kelley tells of the everyday life of working-class rural Kentuckians during the first two decades of the twentieth century. She describes the fleeting moments of pleasure that provide relief from the tedium of their daily toil, as well as the economic hardships and personal tragedies that threaten to engulf them. Kelley renders in dialect the courting, funerals, dances, revival meetings, tobacco harvests, and farmwork of her rural characters.

Although *Weeds* is primarily Judith's story, tracing the downward spiral of her life from exuberant tomboy to worn-out, depressed wife and mother, her life is echoed in the diminished lives of others in her community. For example, Kelley writes in painstaking detail the never-ending chores of the typical poor rural woman of Scott County, Kentucky:

Families must be fed after some fashion or other and dishes washed three times a day, three hundred and sixty-five days in a year. Babies must be fed and washed and dressed and changed and rocked when they cried and watched and kept out of mischief and danger. Floors must be swept and scrubbed and stoves cleaned and a never ending war waged against the constant encroaches of dust, grease, stable manure, flies, spiders, rats, mice, ants, and all the other breeders of filth that are continually at work in country households.

Describing as well the hard work of Judith's husband, Jerry, Kelley does not suggest that the poor tenant farmer's life in rural Kentucky is difficult only for the women, however, she devotes more of her novel to depicting women's work than men's. And it is these vivid images of the "female experience" that remain in my mind long after I finished Kelley's superb novel.

—S. Koochek

Book Review Section

Biography, fiction, and a search

Anderson, Margaret. *Forbidden fires*. Edited and with an introduction by Mathilda Hills. Tallahassee, FL: Naiad Press, 1996. Cloth, ISBN 1-56280-123-6, \$21.95.

Almost three decades ago in *The ladder*, Barbara Grier made a passing reference to an unpublished novel of lesbian love written by Margaret Anderson, the legendary editor of *The little review*. Four years later, a speaker mentioned the "Paris lesbians" at a Modern Language Association conference presentation. These events, combined with a response to a fan letter in her college years, led Mathilda Hills on a quest to write Anderson's biography, an endeavor which has taken her over 20 years.

Margaret Anderson, with Jane Heap, founded *The little review*, still considered the most important literary magazine in U.S. history. Anderson also wrote three notable autobiographies: *My thirty years' war*, *The fiery fountains*, and *The strange necessity*. For the literary world, Anderson's publishing the work of Amy Lowell, Djuna Barnes, and Emma Goldman as well as James Joyce, Ezra Pound, Sherwood Anderson, and others may be considered her most impressive contribution, however, her reputation rests in part with the women with whom she was friends and sometimes lovers—Gertrude Stein and Alice B. Toklas, Kathryn Hulme (*The nun's story*), Georgette Le Blanc, and Solita Solano, to mention a few.

Forbidden fires contains three fascinating stories. The first is a biography of Anderson's life, beginning with her birth in 1886 in Indianapolis and ending with her death in 1973 in a French village after a life of passion in France. Many of the 97 photographs from Margaret Anderson's personal collection, included here, have not been previously published.

The second "story" of this book is the novel which Anderson called "the story...which I love to remember." Her portrayal of romantic love features Claire, the 18-year-old protagonist, who develops a relationship that is to last 30 years.

Mathilda Hills' personal account of her search for information about Anderson is the third part of this book. In relating these adventures, she shows the us a generation of lesbians many of us are unaware of.

Although the writing is somewhat stilted (particularly in the novel itself, indicating a literature from an earlier era) and sometimes results in confusion about specific events, the book is an important account of lesbians'—and women's—lives during the early twentieth century. And, as Hills says, Anderson's writing is "the perfect antidote to *The wells of loneliness*." *Forbidden fires* is an invaluable part of our history, showing the abilities of women at a time when men were considered to be totally in control.

—N. Ward

Self-discovery in Canada

Decter, Ann. *Honour: a novel*. Vancouver, B. C.: Press Gang Publishers, 1996. Paper, ISBN 0-88974-057-7, \$16.95 Canada, \$14.95 US.

Honour is the latest offering from Ann Decter, Canadian novelist, poet, essayist, and children's writer. This novel centers around Jane Cammen, protagonist of Decter's earlier novel, *Paper, scissors, rock*, Jane's erstwhile lover Marie Latouche, and their friend Shulamit Weiss. The novel follows the three friends as each journeys toward self-discovery by examining the past. For Jane, that means writing a master's thesis about her mother, an Irish immigrant to Canada who became a leading feminist politician but whose private life was less successful. For Marie, an examination of the past means uncovering painful truths about her origins. Shula, whose parents are Holocaust survivors, must learn about the grim horrors of the Holocaust. In coming to terms with their pasts, each of these women learns to accept change and growth in her present circumstances.

Much to its credit, this novel presents its lesbian feminist characters and their perspectives in a proud and positive light. The down side of having three primary characters whose political views are so closely aligned and whose lives are intermingled is the difficulty of successfully establishing the singularity of each character; I had to read well into the novel and absorb several minute details of each character's history before I could reliably distinguish amongst the three. I am pleased to read a novel with characters whose sexual and political identities, too often considered dangerous or deviant by a myopic society, are treated forthrightly as integral parts of their complex, good-hearted lives. However, Decter's well-intentioned inclusive politics leads her to take aim at so many aspects of contemporary sociopolitical life that one gets fairly lost in the muddle. The Holocaust, socialized medicine, immigration, homophobia, rape, racial and ethnic prejudice, domestic violence, electoral politics, and sexism all come under scrutiny, and the list doesn't stop there. Even as a reader who shares Decter's social views, I felt beleaguered by so much relentless politicking; it lends a slightly pious air to an otherwise dynamic novel.

—M. Henn

Book Review Section

Shoeless but not clueless

Hartman, Cherry. *The Well-Heeled Murders*. Duluth, MN: Spinsters Ink, 1996. Paper, ISBN 1-883523-10-8, \$10.95.

In Cherry Hartman's first mystery novel, we are introduced to Morgan McRain, a therapist with a hidden talent for sleuthing. Hidden, that is, until she finds the body of fellow therapist Lucinda Frazier strangled and shoeless. Morgan immediately begins asking questions. Could she have been murdered by a patient? Her son? Why are her shoes missing? Detective Sam Reynolds enlists Morgan's help, and the two set out to find Frazier's killer.

Frazier and her ex-husband, it develops, were involved in a partner-swapping club with four other couples. As Morgan and Sam talk to the other members, the entanglements and intrigues of the group surface: who is in love with whom, who is having an affair with whom, and other such questions come into play. In the words of one of the club members, everyone seems to be sleeping with someone else's spouse. Meanwhile, another member of the club is found dead and barefoot. The closer our investigators get to the truth, the more dangerous the situation, and Morgan soon finds herself and her family threatened.

Morgan is certainly not the lonely detective-type. She lives in a happy household with her partner April, and April's daughter and brother. Morgan is bright, attractive and generally likable, if not a bit too politically correct.

Hartman writes with a wit that makes this novel enjoyable to read. Unfortunately, the mystery is a bit predictable, and at times it is difficult to keep all the names and relationships straight. —B. Jedlicka

Unearthing an old family secret

Drury, Joan M. *Silent Words*. Duluth, MN: Spinsters Ink, 1996. Paper, ISBN 1-883523-13-3, \$10.95.

In *Silent words*, columnist Tyler Jones is once again in search of the truth. Driven by her mother's dying words, Jones travels to her family's hometown in northern Minnesota to look for their mysterious meaning. On her way to eventually unearthing her family's history, Jones also rediscovers childhood friends, long lost family members, and part of herself previously hidden beneath her busy urban career life back in San Francisco. While entertaining mystery buffs and feminist readers alike, this book also deals with some serious issues such as the destruction that comes from silence, the oppression of women, lesbianism, and the ties that hold family members together and issues that pull them apart.

The characters are strong and believable, especially the neighboring couple Ellie and Hank. They are a firm example of a gay couple who has

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accepted and maintained their relationship over many years. The scenes are descriptive and visual, and one longs for the beauty and solitude of the northeastern shores of Lake Superior.

Apart from other mysteries filled with suggestive clues that leave the reader too miffed to enjoy the surrounding story, author Joan Drury, who is also publisher of Spinsters Ink, writes *Silent words* in a plot-building, refreshingly simple first-person style. Strong on suspense and mystery, this modern-day tale flows from page to page. A must for lovers both of mysteries and feminists' work. —L. Duda

Planning our summer vacation

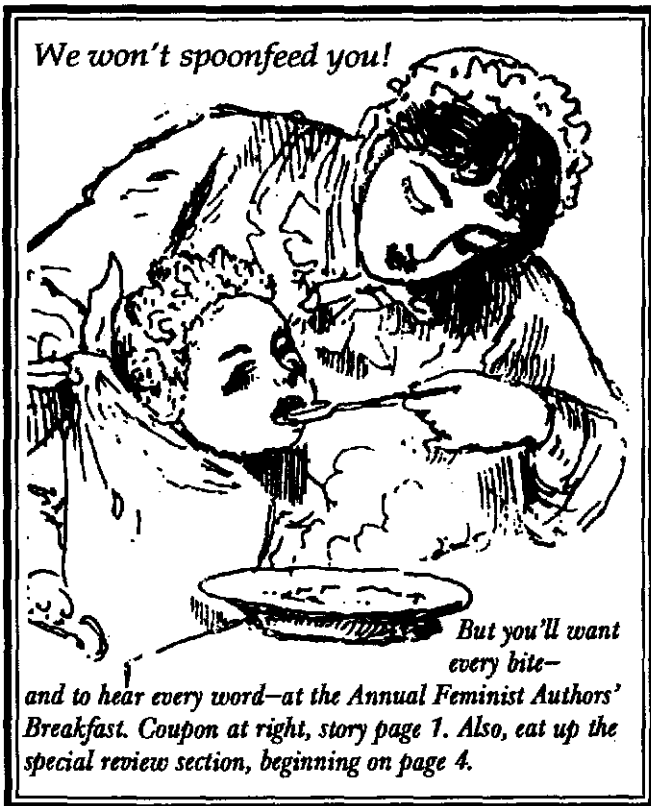
Govier, Katherine, ed. *Without a guide: contemporary women's travel adventures*. Saint Paul, MN: Hungry Mind Press, 1996. Paper, ISBN 1-886913-04-8, \$16.00.

Not long ago, returning from an ALA conference, I waited to depart on a flight that was first delayed several hours, then cancelled, and then rescheduled for the next morning, way too early for someone like me to get up. This time we went to my destination, circled until we ran low on fuel, and flew back to Dallas to wait for another try. I thought I was having a bad time, but then I read E. Annie Proulx's "On the train to hell and can't get off," a classic and humorous account of a truly nightmarish journey, and I realized that, when things go wrong, these travails, as well as the good times, are part of the experience of travelling.

Without a guide's editor, award-winning novelist Katherine Govier, has collected eclectic, international, and memorable accounts of women's travels all over the world, many by well-known writers. The travel essays range widely, from all parts of the globe by women of several nationalities, from exotic experiences like Margaret Atwood's trip to the Galápagos Islands in "Islands of the mind," to more domestic yet still daring trips like Ysenda Maxtone Graham's ill-fated hike down the Grand Canyon, "Through a barren land." Robyn Davidson, in "Alone across the Outback," shares an episode in her journey across Australian wilderness with only four camels and a dog, and Wendy Law-Yone writes of her efforts to leave her home in Burma, in 1967, to join her foreign husband in "The year of the pigeon."

The troubles of travelling, the revelations that make all our efforts worthwhile, sheer survival, play, and personal growth are the issues these writers grapple with as they struggle to recognize and deflect their own assumptions. They learn to dicker in bazaars, take snapshots, argue with vendors, and deal with the everyday aggravations and rewards that come when we expose ourselves to unfamiliar people and cultures. The book makes enjoyable reading, especially while you are at home, dreaming of your next trip. —M. Talnton

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