

Book review:

Lesbian Mystery is a Thriller

by Linda Markin

Between Angela Lansbury's "Murder, She Wrote" and Barbara Wilson's novels, I'm becoming a mystery fan. Barbara Wilson's first feminist thriller could also deal with political and psychological complexities. In her second whodunit, Sisters of the Road, Wilson has again taken on some tough issues and kept up a steady, engrossing mystery plot as well.

When a young woman is brutally murdered on the Seattle streets, Pam Nilsen, super-sleuth, goes in search of the victim's best friend, Trish Margolin, and the murderer. Along the way, Nilsen encounters teenage prostitutes, other runaways, and a few feminist professionals -- a lawyer and a social worker who know more about the

world of prostitution than she does.

Many substantial issues surface during the course of the story, and Wilson does an excellent job of voicing different points of view without succumbing to didacticism or a tedious debate. Questions concerning prostitution, pornography, violence against women, class, and choice are woven into the story. Because each of Wilson's very believable characters speaks from her own experience, the reader comes away without

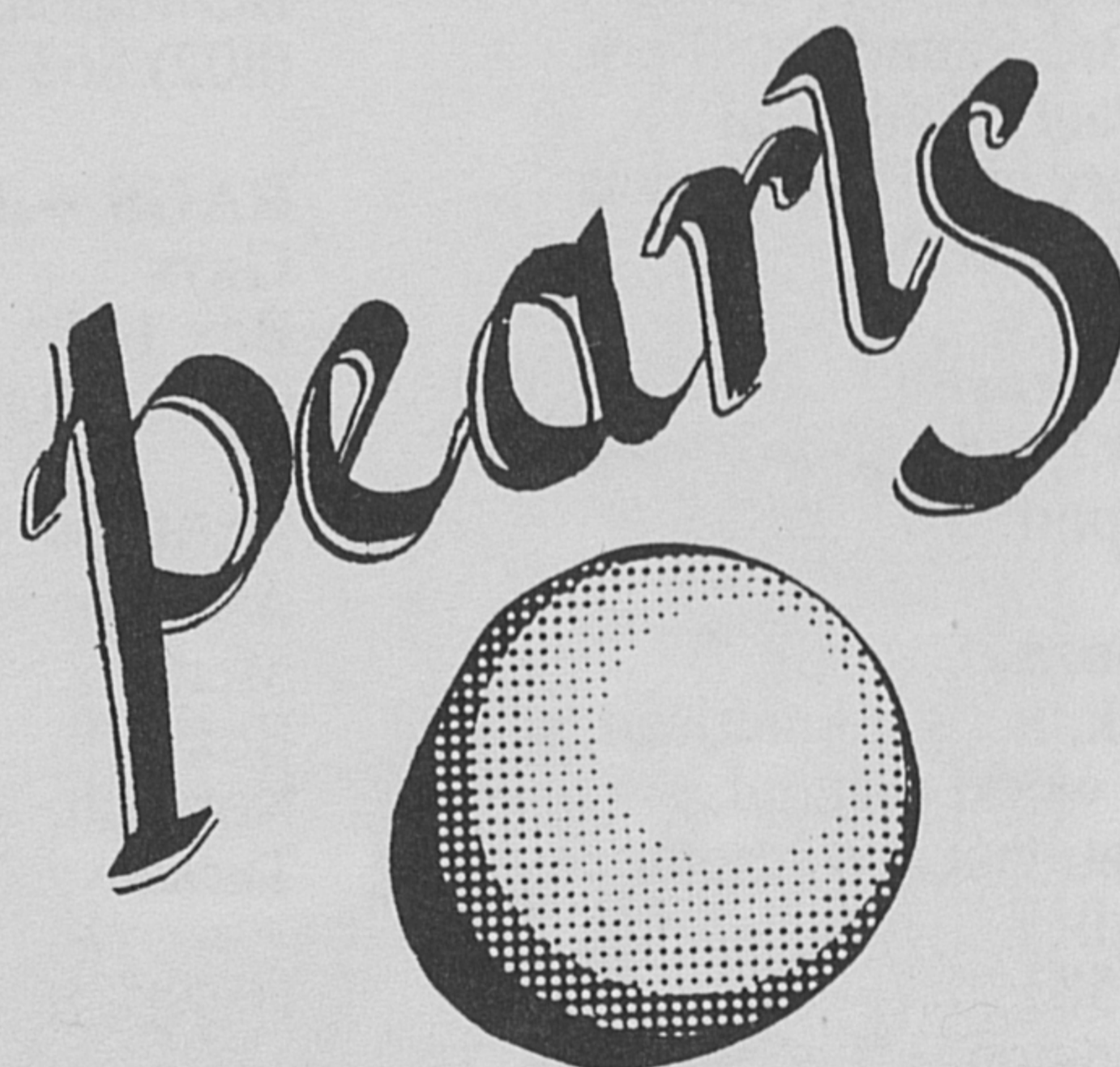
easy answers but satisfied that the complexities involved have been portrayed justly. The integrity of the mystery plot holds these voices together.

Lesbian content and subplots are minimal in Sisters of the Road, but main characters are lesbian, and that sensibility informs the novel. Pam Nilsen, lesbian feminist super-sleuth, is my kind of hero. Now if only Jessica Fletcher...

In Memoriam

I lost a friend a few weeks ago. No, not to AIDS although it seems as if we are all losing people we know to AIDS. No, this was something much simpler. He got drunk one night, fell down and died a couple of days later. He was 20 years old - full of life - full of energy - full of love. He first walked into my office over a year ago and announced that he was a member of the gay community and was proud of it and thought it was great. I agreed and asked if he was having any problems with being gay. He said no but just wanted me to know, and he wanted to know that he could come periodically just to talk. His decision to be in the Gay/Lesbian Pride Celebration Parade this past summer was a big decision. He carried his sign "Just looking for a few good men" with that wonderful and mischievous smile on his face. He was at times outrageous, at times flamboyant, at times scared but always proud - proud of his uniqueness, proud of his wonderfully supportive non-gay friends he had helped to understand what being gay was all about. He was planning to talk with his parents this coming summer - at least to his Mom. And we had spent some time discussing this. Hiding his gayness from his family hurt, "straightening" up his room was hard on his friends, not having him come back after semester break will be devastating - losing a proud, happy, loving and caring young man from our already small community is indeed a sad loss - he will not soon be forgotten as he enriched all of us who knew him and shared in his life, his energy and his pride at being gay.

Dave



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