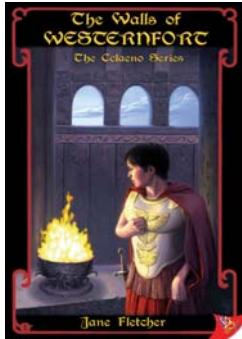


Book Review: May 2005

by Yvette Murray, PhD (reviewer at [Sapphic Reader](#))



The Walls of Westernfort, **The Celaeno Series**

Jane Fletcher

ISBN: 1-933110-24-4

Trade paper, 304 pp, \$15.95

March, 2005

Lesbian Speculative Fiction/Adventure

Bold Strokes Books, Inc.

www.boldstrokesbooks.com

SapphFire (Austin)

Sapphic Reader

Email:

Sapphic_Reader@SapphFire.org

When Natasha Ionadis is relieved of sentry watch by a summons to the Temple of Celaeno, she is recruited for a dangerous mission into enemy territory. The covert operation involves penetrating Westernfort and executing the leaders of a rebel movement. Although the prospects for surviving the mission are minimal for the young guardswoman, she eagerly volunteers to defend the Goddess against the heretics who defy her teachings. During the long, hazardous trip to Westernfort, Natasha emotionally bonds with the team leader, Rohanna, who becomes her surrogate mother. When the conspirators infiltrate the rebel stronghold, Natasha is ready to do her duty by sacrificing her life. Rohanna decides to gather more intelligence information; however, so the assassinations are postponed. During the intervening months while Natasha lives undercover among the heretics, she falls in love with one of the women. She also discovers that the rebel leaders are not as evil as she was led to believe. When Rohanna gives the final order to carry out the executions, Natasha is confronted with an agonizing dilemma. Does she fulfill her vow to kill the heretics, or does she betray her companions?

In *The Walls of the Westernfort*, Jane Fletcher spins a captivating story about youthful idealism, honor, and courage. The action is fast paced and the characters are compelling in this gripping sci-fi adventure.

Reprinted with permission.



Order from these Distributors:

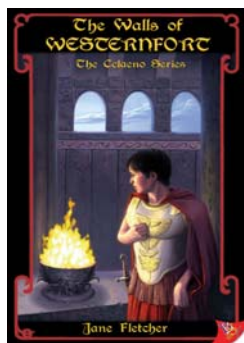
CDS.....800 343-4499 Baker & Taylor.....800 775-1100

Ingram.....800 937-8000 Bookazine....800 548-3855

Direct from BellaDistribution
800 533-1973

Book Review: August 2005

by M.J. Lowe (reviewer at [MBR](#))



The Walls of Westernfort, **The Celaeno Series**

Jane Fletcher

ISBN: 1-933110-24-4

Trade paper, 304 pp, \$15.95

March, 2005

Lesbian Speculative Fiction/Adventure

Bold Strokes Books, Inc.

www.boldstrokesbooks.com

Midwest Book Review

278 Orchard Drive
Oregon, WI 53575-1129
Phone: 1-608-835-7937
E-mail: mwbookrevw@aol.com

James A. Cox
Editor-in-Chief

For Natasha Ionadis, the rules of life are as clear as her reflection on the breast plate of her Temple Guard uniform. For the last few of her 22 years, her mantra has been the Guard maxim, "when in doubt, polish it." In *Walls of Westernfort*, this devout young woman is offered an opportunity by the Temple hierarchy to be part of a covert mission and she leaps at the chance to offer her life to her goddess, Celaeno. She is to be part of a team of three women who are to infiltrate a group of evil heretics, journey to their stronghold known as Westernfort, and assassinate their leaders.

Natasha's commanders doubt any of the women will survive their mission. Posing as a family interested in joining the heretics, the intelligence agents' journey will challenge the beliefs that Natasha has sworn herself to defend, force her to face her own internal crisis, and define the nature of loyalty and faith. Along the way, she also struggles with her definition of family, and finally, love.

Walls of Westernfort is a recent release from Jane Fletcher and part of her growing Celaeno fantasy series. Celaeno is an all-female society in a pre-industrial, pre-Enlightenment setting ruled by a strict theocracy. The idea of a female-centric, goddess-worshipping world is often symbolic of a utopian culture in lesbian-feminist founded speculative fantasy and science fiction. And a new reader to the Celaeno series might be tempted to adopt this view initially, especially as she travels with the naive and earnest Natasha on her coming-of-age quest.

However, it soon becomes apparent that not all is as it may appear in Natasha's world. The Temple authorities who oversee the worship of Celaeno, with its complex undercurrents of science cloaked in religion, will tolerate no deviance from its established policies and will stop at nothing to ensure compliance with temple law. Thus issues involving the nature of religion, particularly that of a fundamentalist view, and the dangers it can impose in politics is a primary theme of Fletcher's Celaeno world.

As a result, *Walls of Westernfort*, is not only a highly engaging and fast-paced adventure novel, it provides the reader with an interesting framework for examining the same questions of loyalty, faith, family and love that Natasha must face.

Refreshing in its original twists on old themes, the *Walls of Westernfort* is well conceived and Fletcher's characters are multifaceted and interesting. Through Natasha's eyes the reader is treated to layered discoveries of the complexities of these women. Indeed, it is through familiarity that the "evil heretics" are revealed to be intelligent, equally determined women struggling to survive within their own conscience. This humanization of the evil enemy creates increasingly difficult internal conflicts for Natasha, forcing her to think for herself rather than accept established doctrine.

It is unnecessary to have read any other Celaeno novels to follow the action and the unfolding culture. While some of the characters in *Walls* will be familiar to readers of other Celaeno titles, the series is not designed to be strictly chronological. Rather, it appears to be theme-based on the institutions of that world, with stories focusing on the ruling Sisters of the Temple, the Temple Guard, the Rangers, the Militia, the psychically-skilled healers known as Imprinters and, perhaps most importantly, the heretics.

In *Walls*, we see the Temple Guard, inside and out. We learn of their strict code of discipline and life, including abstinence from alcohol and sex, and with Natasha we learn of the harsh, cruel methods the Guard employs to deal with heretics in the name of Celaeno. Natasha finds herself struggling with age-old conflicts faced by military personnel. Is it lawful to complete a mission that is morally wrong? Is it insubordination to refuse? Who gets to decide?

Related to Natasha's self-questioning is her growing attraction to Dani, one of the heretics assigned to guide the "family" to Westernfort. A potter by trade, Dani's short life is marked by scars from a great deal of loss and pain, courtesy of the Guards. And as the attraction and affection between the two women grows, it will become apparent that before Dani can allow herself the hope of loving Natasha, she will have to deal with those scars.

In *Walls*, Fletcher brings this chapter of Natasha's life to a satisfying conclusion. However, it is clear that many stories of Celaeno remain to be explored. This reviewer will be looking for other titles set in Celaeno and hopes that Fletcher continues with her storytelling.

Reprinted with permission.



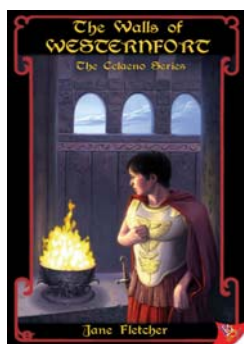
Order from these Distributors:

CDS.....800 343-4499 Baker & Taylor.....800 775-1100
Ingram.....800 937-8000 Bookazine....800 548-3855

Direct from BellaDistribution
800 533-1973

Book Review: September 2005

by Kathi Isserman (reviewer at [IGW](#))



The Walls of Westernfort, **The Celaeno Series**

Jane Fletcher

ISBN: 1-933110-24-4

Trade paper, 304 pp, \$15.95

March, 2005

Lesbian Speculative Fiction/Adventure

Bold Strokes Books, Inc.

www.boldstrokesbooks.com

Independent Gay Writer

Ronald L. Donaghue

Editor-in-Chief

With Jane Fletcher's mesmerizing stories, *The Walls of Westernfort* (winner of the 2005 Golden Crown Literary Awards- Sci-Fi/Fantasy) and *Rangers at Roadsend*, the first two books in her Celaeno Series, she has converted this reader into a sci-fi lover. Each book takes us into a magical world fraught with danger and full of moral dilemmas.

In *The Walls of Westernfort* young Guard Natasha Ionadis accepts a dangerous undercover mission, knowing that its success may depend upon her dying. Natasha aka Jess and her two "mothers", Cal and Rohanna, must travel as spies to Westernfort to assassinate three leaders, Gina, Kimberly and Lynn, of a rebel heretic movement. Their movement must cease as it is evil and against all that Celaeno stands for. Along the journey to Westernfort and while living there, Natasha gets to know one of these "heretics", her guide Dani, to whom she is attracted. She begins to question everything she has learned and is left with some very difficult choices because someone will die no matter what she decides to do.

The ethical dilemma that Natasha must face is what makes *The Walls of Westernfort* so captivating. Every teaching she has learned until this journey is now in question. Natasha is discovering that when she gets to think for herself, there is not one right answer. These women are not evil because they do not possess the same beliefs as she does. By struggling with these questions, Natasha is even more confused because now her choices are not clear cut. On the one hand, she may be killing women that she does not believe are evil, and on the other hand she may be risking the lives of her comrades. Fletcher presents Natasha's inner turmoil so convincingly through her thoughts and interactions with the other characters that as a reader, I found it difficult to choose the right answer for Natasha.

This is a thought-provoking intelligent story that stays with the reader long after the last page is read.

Reprinted with permission.



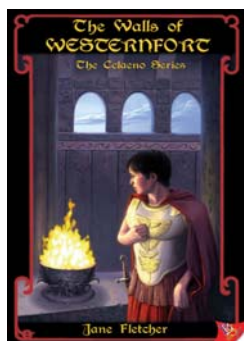
Order from these Distributors:

CDS.....800 343-4499 Baker & Taylor.....800 775-1100
Ingram.....800 937-8000 Bookazine....800 548-3855

Direct from BellaDistribution
800 533-1973

Book Review: November 2005

by R. Lynne Watson (reviewer at MegaScene)



The Walls of Westernfort, **The Celaeno Series**

Jane Fletcher

ISBN: 1-933110-24-4

Trade paper, 304 pp, \$15.95

March, 2005

Lesbian Speculative Fiction/Adventure

Bold Strokes Books, Inc.

www.boldstrokesbooks.com

MegaScene

611 S. Palm Canyon Drive, Suite
7B

Palm Springs, California 92264

(760) 327-5178

Fax (760) 778-1968

E-mail: megascene5@dc.rr.com

Bob Hoven

The Walls of Westernfort is...a true delight. Bold, well-developed characters hold your interest from the beginning and keep you turning the pages. The main plot twists and turns until the very end. The sub-plot involves likeable women who seem destined not to be together.

Along the way, the characters must resolve ethical questions as they build their own place in the world. The plot involves a group of women who have split away from the prevailing powers that be. A team of three is sent out to infiltrate and assassinate the leaders of the new group. Will they succeed or will they join the new group? Find out the answer in this excellent read.

Reprinted with permission.



Order from these Distributors:

CDS.....800 343-4499 Baker & Taylor.....800 775-1100

Ingram.....800 937-8000 Bookazine....800 548-3855

**Direct from BellaDistribution
800 533-1973**

Book Review: March/April 2006

by Mary Beans, Plano, Tx (reviewed in Lesbian Connection Magazine)



The Walls of Westernfort

Jane Fletcher

ISBN: 1-933110-24-4

Trade paper, 304 pp, \$15.95

June, 2005

Lesbian Fantasy/Romance

Bold Strokes Books, Inc.

www.boldstrokesbooks.com

**Lesbian Connection
Magazine**

PO Box 811
East Lansing, MI 48826

www.LCOnline.org

Email: elsiepub@aol.com

Jane Fletcher has a great talent for spinning yarns, especially stories of lesbians with swords. *The Walls of Westernfort* is a well written and suspenseful tale...

...Fletcher effectively intertwines the intrigues of the assassination plot with a young woman's inward exploration...and yes, there is romance...This book is a page-turner; you will have a hard time finding a stopping place.

Excerpt of review in the Lesbian Connection magazine.



Order from these Distributors:

CDS.....800 343-4499 Baker & Taylor.....800 775-1100
Ingram.....800 937-8000 Bookazine....800 548-3855

**Direct from BellaDistribution
800 533-1973**