Andie Branson, a thirty-eight-year-old artist, has recently broken up with her longtime boyfriend and is suffering from what might be called artist’s block. She suddenly finds herself in a series of weird and even dangerous sexual encounters and feels like she has no control over her wild, passionate impulses. It would appear that any male in her presence is not safe. While set in Pinehurst and, briefly, the coast of North Carolina, this story does not really depend on its setting for its impact; the protagonist and the story wander far and wide, including to the mystical underground of New Orleans. An interesting concept introduced in the novel is kundalini. “It is reported that kundalini awakening results in deep meditation, enlightenment and bliss. In practical terms, one of the most commonly reported Kundalini experiences is the feeling of an electric current running along the spine.” (“Kundalini.” Wikipedia Viewed 5/20/2013 at http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Kundalini) Does Andie experience this in her search for artistic and spiritual enlightenment?

What is true is that Andie, only child of a wealthy couple who loved, spoiled, and adored their talented daughter, has gotten into a rut with her art. She is faced with a dilemma when she is offered $100,000 to paint the portrait of a Southern senator whom she despises for his politics, racism, and bigotry. But how can she turn down this offer though when she really needs the money? When she does paint Senator Billy Sylvester’s portrait and the painting shows the true character of the man, she has to hide the painting because he does not want it shown in public. He basically wants to picture-nap it for his “private collection.” While some might call Andie’s solution blackmail, others would claim that the new Andie has found a way to reconcile her moral and ethical beliefs with her new artistic awakening and creativity, her kundalini. She has found her way as clearly as the color cobalt blue.

It is difficult to classify this novel: it might be erotica, mysticism, fantasy, female sexual awakening, spirituality, or another genre. Explicit sex and mature content might limit the audience for this work, but public and academic libraries wishing to include North Carolina authors will want to consider purchasing it. Because of its somewhat limited dependence on regional setting, it is not an essential purchase for collections that focus on books set in North Carolina. However, it is likely that many women who have experienced a sexual awakening themselves may relate to the heroine. Peggy Payne is the author of Revelation and Sister India, which was one of the New York Times notable books of the year in 2001.

Carol Truett
Appalachian State University