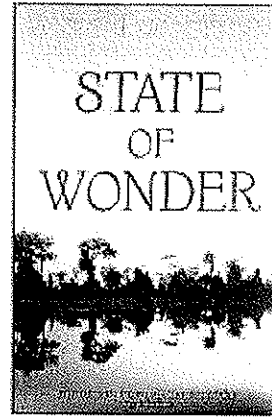


BOOK WATCH

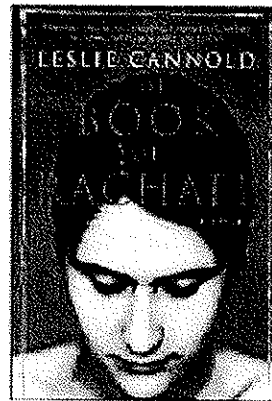
State of Wonder

By Ann Patchett (Bloomsbury, \$36.99)
 The literary highlight of the year for me has just happened. I am happy to admit to being a total Ann Patchett fan, so a new book from her is a cause of great excitement. This one lives up to all expectations. Deep in the Amazon rainforest an elusive scientist, Dr Annick Swenson, is developing a drug that may alter women's lives forever. When another scientist, sent to check on the progress of her mysterious work, disappears, his colleague Marina Singh is reluctantly forced to follow in his perilous footsteps. Marvellously atmospheric, intelligent, and full of challenging concepts, this is a stimulating and fulfilling read.



The Book Of Rachael

By Leslie Cannold (Text, \$40)
 Dr Leslie Cannold, ethicist and social commentator, was named in 2005 as one of Australia's top 20 public intellectuals. This, her first work of fiction, is a brilliant imagining of the life of the fiercely intelligent younger sister of Joshua of Nazareth. Defying the restrictions of her gender, and with the help of her



brother, Rachael becomes educated and forms a relationship with his friend, Judah of Iscariot. Reading this brilliant, fascinating novel was the only time in my life I wished I knew my *Bible* better. I'm sure I missed many of the references, but was nevertheless utterly intrigued and involved.

The Cookbook Collector

By Allegra Goodman (Atlantic, \$36.99)
 Two very different, but equally clever and likeable sisters, feature in Allegra Goodman's latest novel. Emily is the CEO of her own internet company, about to make a fortune in Silicon Valley. Jess is a graduate student of philosophy who loves rummaging in the dusty corners of the antiquarian bookstore where she works part time. With vivid characters including money-lusting techno geeks, tree-huggers, and a rabbi who loves computers, a bookstore called Yorick's and a cache of ancient cookbooks, this is a delicious, romantic and irresistible book.



Reviewed by **Carole Beu**, who owns and runs The Women's Bookshop (www.womensbookshop.co.nz) on Auckland's Ponsonby Rd