

Purple Sage

Lesbian, feminist, gender abolitionist.

A few thoughts on lesbian fiction

Posted on **November 24, 2017**

An [article](#) written by lesbian author Julia Diana Robertson talks about how a publication changed her words when they published her interview, making her sound less lesbian and more “queer.”

“Among other things, throughout the interview, where I said “lesbian” the word lesbian was changed to “queer.”

“Why were words I would never use to describe myself or my novel, like “queerness” and “LGBTQ” and “gender presentation,” put into my mouth?”

This article provides a perfect illustration of the sneaky ways in which lesbians are erased by “queer” culture. Queer culture doesn’t like the word lesbian, because it’s too specific, and because it describes women whose sexuality excludes men. Queer culture prefers to promote the idea of “queer women” instead. Queer women are any women who defy the traditional conservative norms of sexuality, sometimes by engaging in sex with other women, or sometimes by engaging in other outlawed forms of sexuality. Queer is a deliberately vague term—all it means is “odd” or “strange,” but it doesn’t name a sexual orientation or set any boundaries. In fact, the “queer woman” umbrella includes males.

As Robertson comments:

“I was rebranded. I became the mythological “if the situation was right” lesbian. The appropriated slur “queer,” has become the popular descriptor of choice for a “yes” girl or a “maybe” girl— An “I’m not going to rule anything out because I’m open-minded” girl. It doesn’t carry the sting of lesbian. The stigma of lesbian. The boundaries of lesbian. Lesbian is a solid “No.” “Not even if...” And that unwillingness to bend is the very reason lesbians are targeted with insidious psychological warfare.”

As she comments later in her article, when you take the word “lesbian” out of a statement a lesbian made and replace it with “queer,” you are erasing lesbians. Even though “exclusion” is considered a deadly serious crime

these days, no one is concerned about excluding us.

I have to also add something here, because it drives me crazy when I see this, and it was mentioned in the quote above: a person can't be described as "LGBT." It's not possible to be a gay man and a lesbian at the same time, nor is it possible to be homosexual and bisexual at the same time. You are only *one* of the letters LGB, not all of them! Now, I do think you could argue that it's possible to be either an L, G, or B while also being a T. Fair enough, but you can't possibly be *all four* of these letters. When someone calls a person "an LGBT author" or "an LGBT activist," this makes no sense—you're calling one person several people.

Anyway, this article by Robertson got me thinking about the issues surrounding lesbian fiction. As she mentions, and as many of us have noticed over and over, there are lots of published works labelled "lesbian" that weren't written by lesbians and don't reflect who lesbians are. There is also a problem of writing by real lesbians being marginalized in a culture that prefers "queer women" and believes that lesbians are "exclusionary" and "bigoted." When mainstream LGBT publications all adopt a mandate to cater to queer culture, where do lesbians get their work published and reviewed? We're limited to advertising our work on anonymous blogs, in secret Facebook groups, and by word of mouth. We should be able to publish in mainstream publications like anyone else—we aren't doing anything wrong by being lesbians.

I have been thinking about the genre of the "lesbian novel" and what makes it different from, say, a "queer" novel or a mainstream novel that has some lesbian content in it. I define a "lesbian novel" as a novel written by a lesbian, that focuses on lesbians, that represents us authentically, and that tells our truth so that other lesbians can see themselves among the pages. A "queer" novel, on the other hand, either represents a performative sexuality in which same-sex activity is used as a strategy to "spice things up," or in which characters have a bisexual or ambiguous orientation. There's nothing wrong with bisexual characters or experimental same-sex activity, there's only something wrong with mislabeling non-lesbian characters as lesbians. Then there is such a thing as a mainstream novel which has mostly straight characters, but also devotes a small amount of text to a lesbian or bisexual character. This is cool, but it's not a "lesbian novel" just because of a tiny bit of woman-loving-woman content.

A lesbian looking for a lesbian novel has two problems: when she looks through mainstream sources for published works, she is shown lots of material that is not authentically lesbian, and the writing that is authentically lesbian is hard to find because it hasn't been publicized or reviewed by mainstream sources.

In [another article](#) by Julia Diana Robertson, she discusses the idea of segregated literature. She wrote a book that was designed to be a piece of mainstream literature that happened to have a lesbian love story in it, but where "sexuality wouldn't take center stage." You know, like straight people do. The literature that straight people write is mainstream and isn't necessarily "straight literature," nor does it have to focus on sexuality just because characters are heterosexual. She pitched her story to mainstream publishers, and was rejected. She found that she was expected to be either a mainstream straight writer, or pigeonholed as a "lesbian" writer who just wrote for lesbians.

Should literature be desegregated? On the one hand, it would be nice if a lesbian writer could just be a writer,

and not be marginalized as only writing for a small group of people. Anybody can read a work of literature that has lesbians in it, not just lesbians. But at the same time, when lesbians try to work with mainstream institutions, we get lost, forgotten, and erased.

I'm mostly in favor of lesbian writing being a separate genre for a niche market. I wouldn't want to "sell out" by submitting my own writing to a publisher who wanted to make my work more palatable to either straights or "queers." I am happy to write for a limited audience, and I'd rather represent lesbians authentically than make a lot of money. I'm not concerned about writing literature where the focus is on a storyline and sexuality isn't the main theme—I actually prefer when lesbian sexuality *is* the main theme.

But lesbians should be able to be mainstream writers if they want to be. There's a paradox going on here where going mainstream would be good for us but it would also be bad for us. We need mainstream representation and visibility, but we also need the authenticity that comes from being in control of our own publications. Imagine if we could have both though? If we could have authentic lesbian representation from mainstream publishers, then that would be a sign we were no longer discriminated against.

I do hope to read more novels written by lesbians and review them here, but as you all know, my reading list is long and always growing. If only I could quit my day job and just read and write full time!

Dear readers, do you have any thoughts on lesbian writing and publishing?

Advertisements

SHARE THIS:

Loading...

An anthology of queer fairy tales
In "Fun"

Lesbian exclusion from Pride
In "lesbian"

On lesbian lust and identifying as male
In "lesbian"

This entry was posted in **lesbian, lesbian books, Lesbian fiction** and tagged **lesbian, Lesbian fiction** by **purplesagefem**. Bookmark the **permalink [https://web.archive.org/web/20180315025503/https://purplesagefem.wordpress.com/2017/11/24/a-few-thoughts-on-lesbian-fiction/]** .

38 THOUGHTS ON "A FEW THOUGHTS ON LESBIAN FICTION"



shadowedmuses

on **November 24, 2017 at 11:21 pm** said:

You gave me a lot of food for thought. Thanks.
What about the " i " ? What are your thoughts on that in the endless acronyms that now include a +

★ Liked by 1 person



Miep

on **November 25, 2017 at 12:08 am** said:

Reblogged this on [There Are So Many Things Wrong With This](#) and commented:

Good analysis here.

★ Liked by 2 people



purplesagefem

on **November 26, 2017 at 11:34 am** said:

Thanks Miep!

★ Liked by 1 person

**raunchel**on **November 25, 2017 at 4:35 am** said:

This is a great post and it fits perfectly with my own experience. I've found it very hard to find any decent fiction about lesbians, if only because it very often was used by (mostly) male authors to titillate, not to tell an actual story.

One thing that I've noticed posting my writing online is that there is quite an audience that is open to lesbian writing, it's just that the publishers don't really dare to anything outside the box.

★ Liked by 3 people**purplesagefem**on **November 25, 2017 at 4:57 am** said:

You write lesbian fiction?

★ Liked by 1 person**raunchel**on **November 25, 2017 at 5:48 am** said:

I do. I'm currently in the process of moving my current writing project to WordPress because of some issues on the forums where I used to post it.

<https://makeegyptgreatagainblog.wordpress.com>

★ Liked by 1 person**sellmaeth**on **November 25, 2017 at 8:48 am** said:

Publishers tend to be years behind what the audience actually wants. Self-publishing can be a way around that.

★ Liked by [3 people](#)



silverside

on **November 25, 2017 at 11:48 am** said:

Sadly, self-publishing can also be quite expensive. And given that lesbians as a groups tend to have less money, it's yet another cost we bear that others in the queer alphabet do not have to absorb.

★ Liked by [4 people](#)

Widdershins

on **November 26, 2017 at 1:19 am**

said:

It doesn't have to be though. It is a steep learning curve, I'll grant you that, 😊 but the truth is a novel can be published for the cost of an internet connection. The Author has to, of course, produce a quality product, but all she really has to do is invest in her time. Having less money has never stopped us before. We find a way, we always have, we always will, because lets face it, so long as the patriarchy exists lesbians will always be the ultimate anathema.

★ Liked by [2 people](#)



sellmaeth

on **November 26, 2017 at 2:26 pm**

said:

Self-publishing is only expensive if you want to have it printed and/or want to have it properly proofread and a nice cover.

My point of view here is that of a fanfic au-

thor. It is possible to get your creative work out there for free.

★ Liked by [1 person](#)



GallusMag

on **November 25, 2017 at 9:22 am** said:

Reblogged this on [GenderTrender](#).

★ Liked by [1 person](#)



Elisabeth Brook

on **November 25, 2017 at 9:35 am** said:

I couldn't agree more. I am sick of lesbians being branded as queer. We are being erased and it's past time for lesbians to speak out.

★ Liked by [4 people](#)



giuliaalexis

on **November 25, 2017 at 11:35 am** said:

Reblogged this on [ANTHRO FEMINISM](#) and commented: Great article, I suggest also reading the original article.

★ Liked by [2 people](#)



hearthrising

on **November 25, 2017 at 2:40 pm** said:

I second this. Sages added some useful points, but I also got some good things out of the original.

★ Liked by [2 people](#)



silverside

on **November 25, 2017 at 11:45 am** said:

I'm working on a historical novel set before WWI which is women-centered, though I'm not quite sure how explicitly sexual it will turn out to be. But I find it hard to find much fiction that even centers the lives of women in relationships to other women. It's a tricky minefield. I don't shy away from lesbian content per se, but I'm iffy about writing sex scenes that might come across as silly and titillating. But if I focus on the strong emotions and attachments alone, what does that say? That women during this era were never physically intimate? That is obviously not true. So I just struggle along....

★ Liked by [2 people](#)



purplesagefem

on **November 25, 2017 at 11:53 am** said:

Interesting. If you want to talk to me more about your novel, please feel free to email.

★ Like



Branjor

on **November 25, 2017 at 1:21 pm** said:

This is a great post! There is a lesbian novel I like – it is written by a lesbian, authentically lesbian, and has physical sex between women

in it that is loving, affirming and orgasmic, not “silly” or “titillating.” It also focuses on strong emotions and attachments and feminism. It has been around for many years now, so maybe you have heard of it. It begins in the protagonist’s college years of the late 1960s and extends many years into her adulthood. It is a serious novel. I should point out, however, that the main characters are all white, as is the author, and there is only one African American character in it, for those who might be disappointed by that. The novel does not deal with race issues. Of the two young women lovers in the first part of the novel, one is from a middle class background and one is from the working class, but the novel also does not deal with class issues. Both are Jewish, as are some, but not all, of subsequently introduced characters. Anyway, it is called *Choices* and the author is Nancy Toder.

Also want to say here, that yes, I think we should also have more mainstream literature that has a lesbian love story in it too. I would love to read some!

★ Liked by [6 people](#)



hearthrising

on **November 25, 2017 at 2:08 pm** said:

I’ve been struggling with this issue myself, Sage, and thinking about it quite a lot. I feel like sooner or later I’m going to be branded “queer” in a review or interview and I’ve been bracing myself for it. I’m bisexual, not lesbian, which is unquestionably a word that doesn’t mean anything. It could mean male or female, a woman who has flirted with same-sex relationships but never taken the plunge, or (like me) a woman who has lived and loved primarily with the lesbian community. But “queer” does mean something to me. It has such a connotation of lesbian hatred, female erasure, victim-cool “identities” that are steeped in appropriation, and above all male centeredness. It is indelibly linked with misogynist queer theory. When a woman uses that term on herself, it is clear sign to me that she has entered the cult. I don’t know anyone, male or female, with good gay or feminist politics, who uses that word to describe themselves. I hope that the first time someone on the air casually refers to me as “queer” or part of the “queer community” that I don’t jump down their throat. As much as I have come to loath

the word, I recognize that it is often used innocently as the supposed politically correct term.

★ Liked by [4 people](#)



Caro Clarke

on **November 25, 2017 at 3:43 pm** said:

As a writer of lesbian fiction for a lesbian audience, who would be happy to be read by no one else but lesbians (indeed, I would pay everyone else to go away), I feel both discouraged and heartened by this post. Since my work is lesbian historical fiction, I deal with suppression and erasure and danger, and it is discouraging to know that it is still the same-old. On the other hand, lesbians who want to be lesbians are resisting being relabelled, or having their label removed, and this is great—we have to keep fighting and saying ‘no’.

★ Liked by [7 people](#)



DaisyDeadhead

on **November 25, 2017 at 6:46 pm** said:

I am not a lesbian, so I apologize for intruding in this discussion, but just had to say something in solidarity: I certainly have experienced that thing about being interviewed and asked for ‘my pronouns’ and similar genderist bullshit.

These interviewers won’t accept that we simply *will not* participate in their okeydoke, so (IMO) they actually think they are *helping us* by putting these dumb-ass words in our mouths.

The young woman interviewing me (for her dissertation about the 2nd Wave) was sweet and respectful, but you could tell every other thing I said *shocked her to pieces* and she was trying to figure out how to use the material I provided without quoting me directly and thereby getting in trouble.

It might be the same thing with you: it was herself she was worried about, and so changed the words to cover her own ass.

Warm regards! xoxo

★ Liked by [1 person](#)



weirdward

on **November 25, 2017 at 7:15 pm** said:

That is extremely anger inducing that the word 'lesbian' was changed to 'queer' – shows so clearly that these people don't even respect their own supposed politics about the right to self-identify etc. Sadly I think that both mainstream publishers and queer/lgbt publishers are not lesbian friendly in the least. I do know of a lot of lesbian writers who basically write straight stuff to get published by mainstream publishers – Like, I understand why they do that, but personally, I would be bored out of my skull if I had to write about straight characters. Screw that. Queer writing groups, queer literature industry networks and meetups etc. are I've found, primarily straight women salivating over extremely fetishised and sexualised depictions of gay men that they're basically just writing for each other. It's pretty sickening actually. There's usually a handful of actual lesbians and other sexual minorities (gay men etc.) trying to network and gain interest in their work, but they're generally ignored and sidelined. Also I find that when lgbt publishers do publish works with lesbian characters (whether by lesbians or not) they will usually choose the most fetishised representations of lesbians as well – BDSM, terribly written erotica with no characterisations etc. etc. Don't get me wrong, I really like literature that explores lesbian sexuality too, but sadly it's very difficult to find depictions of it done well anywhere.

I believe probably the most publisher-friendly time for lesbians was in the 70s, 80s early 90s when there were many independent feminist and women's presses. A lot of these published lesbian novels, and there were also networks of independent bookshops, women's book clubs, lesbians' book clubs etc. that created grass-roots community distribution and advertising networks. But I don't think we should be entirely seeing all of that with rose colored

glasses, sometimes some of these novels read more like political tracts than well-crafted literature (not that I think literature shouldn't be political, it absolutely should, but novel writing is still an art form in my opinion), and at times political factions could splinter out in all of these groups to the point that deviations from accepted ways of thinking/doing things in 'political literature' as it was understood at the time could also result in marginalisation. (The film *The Watermelon Woman* actually explores a lot of these issues in a rather tongue-in-cheek way. I mean, personally, I don't think it's the best film, but it's very interesting as a documented snapshot of what lesbian politics looked like at the time, and the rather fraught relationship that existed between politics and art).

Basically a lot of these issues are ones lesbian writers have been struggling with for a very long time, and, as also happens with so much important lesbian knowledge, even the nature and visibility of that struggle has been largely erased, which makes it even harder for lesbian writers now who are trying to find their place somewhere in a very hostile landscape.

★ Liked by [5 people](#)



Poet On Watch

on **December 1, 2017 at 3:58 am** said:

I just went through this at glad day bookstore in Canada where I was attacked on stage by a Transwoman after reading my book *Sageburner* which is a book of lesbian poetry. I was set up to get attacked then a mod of Transmen wanted to throw me out the club bookstore. Grrrrr the shit got crazy. They invited me to read and do a workshop, paid for the trip, put me up in a hotel, but when I realized that all the other writers were straight, at an LGBT writers festival (give me a f%@kin break), Trans and queer, I was like ok. Well, I had been selling work at this bookstore for five years. Anyway, I was like ok cool I want to be apart. Then all hell broke out. My picture was not in the program book. My bio was cut up like I did not know who that person was! The book I was touring on which is *Sageburner* was cut out of my bio and not mentioned anywhere but it was the book I was going to be reading from. I had two books in this store one was a queer anthology called *G.R.I.T.S. of southern Girls* but

really it was a lesbian erotic cookbook I just titled it queer for all the same reason that was mention above and my co-editor and was going back and forth with me about the word Queer cause she did not want to be labeled as a lesbian. Whew, I tell you, southern women. I bent over and went for it. But Sageburner was my book and I am a Lesbian. That was the work I presented and got mobbed for doing it the work. Like you stated a very hostile landscape. I filed a police report, but what next, maybe nothing. – Poet On Watch

★ Like



weirdward

on **December 1, 2017 at 7:08 pm** said:

That sounds way out of line! What exactly were the circumstances that led to you filing a police report? Did the mobbing involve physical intimidation, threats and the like? Yeah, I know the kind of environments those conferences etc. can have, they are so freaking toxic to lesbians especially. I really wish all the straights, queers and trans would just F-off and get out of spaces that were created by and for actual LGB writers. But yaknow, even when lesbians try to create something just for lesbians then suddenly we're the most terrible exclusionary people on the planet experience mass amounts of bullying and shaming for trying to have an event of our own.

I mean, this isn't related to literature exactly, but with some of these pro-trans types (specifically the heterosexual and het-queer women in love with trans rights, and in love with their idea of themselves as these great human rights warriors) I have been toying with the idea of when/if I come across one of those women, and if I can even be bothered to try and have a conversation (which can be a huge waste of time), of basically skewing the conversation in such a way as to point out what they actually support – “oh okay, so you believe in the corrective rape of lesbians, that's good to know.” Or “oh okay you

don't believe lesbians have the right to self-determination and self-definition. Good to know." Or "oh okay you don't believe lesbians have the right to assembly. Good to know." Or "oh okay you believe that lesbians deserve to be medically tortured and experimented on. Good to know." Or "oh okay you support lesbians being beaten up for disagreeing with you. Good to know." Pointing out to them in fairly brutal language what it is that they actually believe in and support. And the thing is, I know most of these het women are absolute lesbian-phobes, but they're also extremely invested in this idea of themselves as the Great Straight Saviours – would be interesting to see what happened if they were forced to confront the cognitive dissonances they're living with.

★ Liked by [1 person](#)



purplesagefem

on **December 1, 2017 at 7:31 pm**

said:

Sadly, it's not just straight women. There are plenty of lesbians inexplicably and enthusiastically supporting the trans cult no matter how misogynist and homophobic it gets. 🙄

★ Like



weirdward

on **December 3, 2017 at 10:05 pm**

said:

I don't think it inexplicable that so many lesbians have fallen into line with the queer/trans stuff, though it's very sad. It's pretty much a manifestation of internalized self-hatred combined with a lack of critical

thinking skills (which are really not encouraged anywhere these days, even at universities and the like), combined with ignorance of political history and just history in general (again, not taught – a well informed population is not as easy to control after all) combined with the fact that often the only spaces lesbians can find (particularly young lesbians) are these queer-trans dominated type spaces where lesbians are told they're only acceptable if they're transmen etc. – spaces that reinforce all the self-hatred instead of undoing it. And a huge number of those particular sorts of spaces, even if they claim to be lgbt or all-inclusive or whatever, are usually run by some variety of straight person, not a lesbian or gay or even bisexual person, and the ideologies being manifested are generally very het and homophobic, like, e.g. this dumb idea that lesbians who don't want to perform femininity must be men. The extent to which heterosexuals have colonized the gay and lesbian movement is really a huge part of the problem here, imo.

I also think that for some lesbians, going along with all this stuff is due to a sense of self-preservation. Part of the reason lesbians are hated so much is because women refusing to engage sexually with men and living separately is a huge threat to patriarchy. It doesn't matter why lesbians are lesbians, or whether they are politically aware or not, the political ramifications of being a lesbian under patriarchy remain the same. I think a lot of lesbians sense this dimly and go out of their way to try and placate men (and het society more generally) by trying to prove how they're not a threat, and I feel like one of the way that's manifesting right now is via the large-scale adoption of the queer and trans madness. It's pretty much a doomed strat-

egy, of course, because lesbians (again regardless of reasons for being lesbians or level of political engagement) just by existing are a threat to patriarchy and male supremacy, and men understand this and have always understood it, and have oppressed lesbians brutally for thousands of years as a consequence.

★ Liked by 1 person



elvenmoonwings

on **November 26, 2017 at 6:12 am** said:

I'm reading this blog to try to understand more about feminism and sexuality. This makes it sound to me as if being lesbian means having certain personality characteristics. Genuine question; in order to use the word lesbian to describe herself as a person, how can a woman actually know for sure that she's never going to fall in love with a man, especially if she's very young, such as even being in her twenties? I have heard of very young women, including one friend I had in the in the past, calling themselves bisexual only because they reasoned, how could they actually know they would never fall in love with a man in the future – and, I have had a friend who said she was convinced she was a lesbian, (she certainly seemed it, ie, very much into dating women, and exclusively so, from teens onwards), until she fell in love with the man she's now been with for 13 years, that when she was 27. We hear of, maybe even know, women who allege a change of sexuality – who fall in love with a man after years of exclusively dating women, or, vice versa, after always thinking they were heterosexual – do you think these women have lied, or been deluded, and if deluded, how can a woman tell for sure she won't change sexuality? Is it then a personality type which tells a woman she's not deluded in thinking she's a lesbian?

If there isn't a personality type, I can understand a woman calling herself queer as a term which leaves her sexuality open to

possibilities, of change.

★ Like



purplesagefem

on **November 26, 2017 at 11:45 am** said:

Hello Eleven Moon. When people are really young, they often don't fully understand their sexuality. I think that young people do feel attraction and "warm and fuzzy feelings" toward others but for some people it's vague feelings they can't put a label on yet. Some people are very sure of their orientation from a young age though.

People who are only attracted to one sex know that over time they have only found one sex appealing in a physical and romantic way and can be reasonably sure that this isn't going to change. For some people, their attraction does change over time, and it's okay to revise your understanding of your orientation if that happens.

I don't think that a person is "lying" if they suddenly fall in love with someone they didn't think they could fall in love with. They just didn't know before. People are only lying if they know who they're attracted to and deliberately claim something else. I'm not bothered by women who date women and then later on realize they're in love with a man, I'm only bothered by women who are actively in a romantic/sexual relationship with a man while still calling themselves lesbians.

As for lesbians all having the same personality traits, I don't think so. I've met lesbians who are very, very different from me and who I can't even stand. We're a varied bunch!

★ Like



therealbdgates

on **November 26, 2017 at 10:59 am** said:

Wow, so many issues to comment on in this, Purple Sage! Please

forgive the length of this comment.

Regarding Julia Diana Robertson's lesbian erasure—if I recall correctly, the writer, Corinne Winder, a self-described 'queer' (and, in her own tweeted words, not a "damn lesbian,") along with the editor of GO Mag at that time, Trish Bendix (yes, THAT Trish Bendix, the one who erased all lesbian content from AfterEllen), changed JDR's use of the word 'lesbian' to 'queer' or 'LGBT' where they saw fit. JDR circled every change to her words in the screenshots of the article, and it's impressively disgusting. It's in JDR's Twitter media timeline if you want to check it out.

To be completely honest, Fannie Flagg is the only lesbian author I know of who has had a lesbian love story (Fried Green Tomatoes) published via mainstream media, or in what I refer to as the 'general population.' Please, if you haven't, read the book, it is so much better than the movie. If there are any others in the main, I'd love to read them.

Now, about self-publishing: Amazon has a huge catalog works tagged as 'lesbian,' 'lesbian fiction' or 'lesbian romance' written by lesbian authors such as Harper Bliss, Jae, Radclyffe, Karin Kallmaker, Gerri Hill—the list goes on and on. Self-publishing is easy, the program walks you through the process, it costs NOTHING, and your work can be produced in as many forms as you'd like—as an ebook, a paperback, an audible. Your book is distributed worldwide (yes, you read that right) and the royalties are excellent. I checked on Barnes and Noble, their catalog of lesbian fiction is not at all impressive, and Apple iBooks has maybe a handful that I can only describe as straight-people porn (and bad porn at that).

The Amazon exposure is great, and is tied to a GoodReads account for the author. You may even be approached by a bricks-and-mortar publishing house with an offer of representation (here is where I suggest getting an agent to protect your interests). So it's a great stepping-stone if you want to go in that direction. And please note that none of this is a plug for Amazon, it's just what I've found in my experience as a self-publishing author.

Also, I was truly surprised by who is actually reading from the lesbian genre on Amazon. There are a lot of heterosexual women reading lesbian fiction/romance, so the audience is way bigger than

you'd first expect. Oh, and here's a tip: they get really ticked if they don't get their "happily-ever-after" ending. In fact, some want trigger warnings if the book doesn't have an 'HEA' ending (but we're snowflakes, LOL), and they'll kill your book in their review solely for that reason.

So, while I'd really like to see more true lesbian works given recognition in the mainstream, I know that our stories are being read by mainstream readers who seek us out. As one in-real-life reader told me, "love is love."

★ Liked by [1 person](#)



purplesagefem

on **November 26, 2017 at 11:56 am** said:

Hello, B.D. Gates, I don't mind long comments at all, and this is an excellent one! Thanks for the great info here. I'm glad she tweeted the corrections—that was a great move. I'd have seen that if I was a Twitter user!

I'd agree that Fried Green Tomatoes is mainstream, and yet the lesbian love story has been diluted to be palatable to a straight audience. I did read the book years ago, and I can't remember if they actually acknowledged being in a relationship in the book, but I don't think so. They certainly don't acknowledge it in the film. To me, FGT doesn't qualify as a lesbian novel because they don't explicitly acknowledge being in a lesbian relationship, and they don't have any physical relationship, so you only get "clues" they're lesbians but you can't prove that they aren't just good friends. I like FGT as a woman-centered story that passes the Bechdel test, but I don't consider it a lesbian story. (And funny story...I own the film on VHS tape but I don't have a VCR anymore...)

I'm very interested in self-publishing for free! Thanks for the info and I'll have to look into that.

★ Liked by [2 people](#)

**Rose M. Jordan**on **November 26, 2017 at 12:38 pm** said:

The best book on the lesbian novel is Bonnie Zimmerman, *The Safe Sea of Women*, 1990. Covers loads of good lesbian novels but by time she is writing things are already starting to change away from lesbian feminist novels and away from lesbian novels at all.

★ Like

**The Excavator**on **November 27, 2017 at 3:21 pm** said:

I was just noting recently that a woman defining herself right out as a lesbian carries with it a little subversive shock these days. Much more common to hear the term “queer” or to some flimsy “whatever goes” kind of statement. “Lesbian” carves out a space in which men are simply not invited, desired, or even acknowledged — the ultimate crime.

★ Like

**Francois Tremblay**on **November 28, 2017 at 8:00 pm** said:

I have been thinking about this for a while. I am working on a novel currently, but I am also developing ideas for my next one. It would not be a lesbian novel, obviously (mostly a pro-feminist novel), but it would involve a lesbian protagonist and a very pro-lesbian point of view. Can a man write a lesbian protagonist that lesbians find believable? Obviously, all characters must be written as complete human beings, and I am always mindful of that.

★ Like

**purplesagefem**



on **November 28, 2017 at 8:35 pm** said:

Well, I wouldn't be interested in reading a lesbian character written by a man.

★ Like



Francois Tremblay

on **December 3, 2017 at 7:48 am** said:

Do you have any recommendation of fiction that has particular well written lesbian characters?

★ Like



purplesagefem

on **December 3, 2017 at 10:10 am**
said:

There is a lesbian fiction category in my side bar for your convenience. Also check out my favorite:

<https://purplesagefem.wordpress.com/2017/05/25/book-review-bishops-run-by-b-d-gates/>

★ Like



hearthrising

on **November 29, 2017 at 8:57 pm** said:

Men have a very hard time getting ANY female character right. I read Zane Gray and other Westerns as child and it bothered me how little they understood their female characters. Even a sensitive writer like Frank Waters couldn't do women characters, and Anne Hillerman, while not as good a writer as her father, understands the female characters he

created better than he did. So I doubt very much that a man could create a believable lesbian character. But while I used to get annoyed by the attempts of male writers with female characters, today I give them props for trying. I think it's a good idea to have diverse characters, be prepared for the criticism, and learn from it.

★ Like



Francois Tremblay

on **November 29, 2017 at 9:02 pm** said:

I see. Thank you for these points! Like I said, I don't know if I'll ever attempt it or not, but if I do, I definitely won't do it without a suitable writing partner.

★ Like



lesbot97

on **November 30, 2017 at 9:23 pm** said:

Wonderful post! relate to it in many ways 🙏 Thanks for sharing

★ Like