

Mostly lesbian reading list

An avid reader and writer of queer words recommends some books to take home this winter

by Lee Lynch

I liked these books. I admired the way the authors wanted to tell stories and/or to teach something. All but two are by women, most by lesbians. There are so many dykes being published now, and the disparity between our earnings/promotion/recognition and that of men is so glaring, that I decided to concentrate this year on lesbian writers, especially on the women's presses.

This is not a bestseller list. It does not reflect the buying habits of urbanites with expendable income, nor does it capture the tastes of a cross-over audience (straights reading gays, men reading dykes, etc.). These notes reflect what's moved, tickled or challenged one lesbian who's been reading and writing queer books since 1960. Please add some to your gift lists.

Rusty, How Her and Me Went to

Colorado and Everything, Except Not Really by Garbo, Big Breakfast Publishing. *Rusty* is the most exciting novel I've read in years. It's about working-class dykes in contemporary middle America living day to day. The author has a poignantly accurate ear for language, and eye for description. Not yet in bookstores so order direct. PO Box 02094, Columbus, Ohio, 43202. \$10.95 plus shipping (First copy \$1.50, others \$.50).

Finding The Lesbians by Julia Penelope, Crossing. This is another treasure. Women all over the world tell true life tales of seeking and finding dykes. It's the Official Dyke Hobby in print for the first time!

Hothead Paisan, Homicidal Lesbian Terrorist by Mommy St. Wee-Wee, aka Diane DiMassa and Stacy Sheehan, Giant Ass Publishing. POB 214, New Haven, CT 06502. \$3/issue, \$10/year. These spirited, angry, fun-loving women have put together a delightful comic book. It captures everything from man-revenge fantasies to living with a very silly cat. Some violence and male nudity. Like real life, a lot of craziness.

Women's Glib, A Collection of Women's Humor edited by Rosalind Warren, Crossing. Not exclusively lesbian, but I was laughing too hard to count. Really.

Free Ride by Marilyn Gayle, Firebrand Books. This quirky novel about middle-class, highly educated women in the alternative Santa Fe-Albuquerque communities is intriguing. A study, among other things, of an outlaw dyke with a yen for "straight" women. Some drugs and mixed gender sex.

BOOKS



Good Enough to Eat by Leslea Newman, Firebrand. Discovering Leslea Newman, published in 1986, was a great treat this year. The coming out of the bulimic protagonist in this novel was so sweetly, innocently told that I cried. I love this author.

Common Lives/Lesbian Lives, A Lesbian Quarterly. POB 1553, Iowa City, IA, 52244. \$15/year. \$25/2 years. \$35/3 years. \$10 hardship. This is *CL/LL's* tenth year. A magazine that sometimes delights me, sometimes enrages me (it's a dyke mag!) which has given an enormous number of lesbians voice and many of us a start. Stories, poetry, art, sometimes music, drama, essays. Think of a gift subscription!

Her by Cherry Muhanji, Aunt Lute. Some of the strongest, loveliest, richest language I've read. About African-American women, including lesbian love, in Detroit 30 plus years ago. The cover should be marketed as a poster.

Hawkings by Karen Lee Osborne, Third Side. A story of a very believable dyke and her community. Set in Chicago, the main character copes with HIV disease, love, life as we know it.

Hodag Winter by Deborah Wiese, Mother Courage. Life in recovery is not always easy, but these two midwestern lovers tough it out even through major job discrimination.

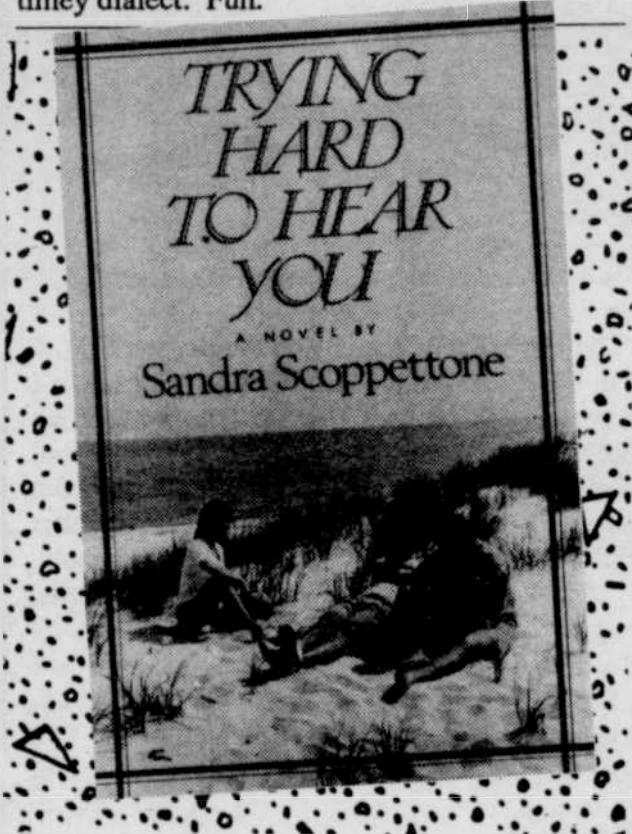
Singin' The Sun Up by Ocala Wings, Mother Courage. This is a moving first novel about a young Southern woman coming out. Animal communication and childhood abuse are major themes.

Incidents Involving Mirth by Anna Livia, Eighth Mountain Press. Short stories of imagination and prose that dance. Also, Livia's sequel to the funny *Relatively Norma*, called *Minimax*, should be available by press time.

Side By Side by Isabel Miller, Naiad. The author of *Patience and Sarah* tells an uncannily similar, and appealing, love story in a modern setting.

The Woman With Red Hair by Sigrid Brunel, New Victoria. This is a combination mystery/adoptee search set in France with a touch of lesbian European history. Lots of local color.

Heartbreak on the High Sierra by Fiona Cooper, Virago. A ferociously active western with a villain out of silent films and lesbian characters with names like Typewriter, Fingerbone and Rainbow-Wings. Some violence, a lot of old-timey dialect. Fun.



Trying Hard to Hear You and *Happy Endings Are All Alike* by Sandra Scoppettone, Alyson. Reissues of two fine young adult novels for all of us. The latter is lesbian, the former about a young woman with a gay male best friend. Some violence.

Benediction by Diane Salvatore, Naiad. A well-told coming out story about a Catholic girl in a parochial school.

Take Me to the Underground by Renee Hansen, Crossing. Tres moderne, tres romantic story of obsessive love and substance abuse between two very young women who make each other crazy. All too familiar, but very well done.

Dancing on Tisha B'av by Lev Raphael, St. Martins. A haunting book of stories by a Jewish gay man with a universality that makes it very special.

Mysteries

Murder by Tradition by Katherine V. Forrest, Naiad. Top-of-the-line police procedural/courtroom drama. Quite bloody. Warm visits with the old crowd from previous books.

Vital Lies by Ellen Hart, Seal. I'm a Hart fan with a special place in my own for sidekick Cordelia. No real villains here, but a coven, a spooky old midwestern house and that inspiringly grounded yet adventurous heroine, Jane Lawless.

In The Game by Nikki Baker, Naiad. A hard-boiled-amateur-detective story and social commentary on black middle class women in the white boy's world of finance. Unique.

Final Session by Mary Morell, Spinsters. Ever had your head messed with by a villainous lesbian therapist? Excellent crime detailing with an Hispanic police detective on her first case.

Everything You Have is Mine by Sandra Scoppettone, Little, Brown. A comical self-consciously mysterious yarn that evokes the humor and horror of New York and New Yorkers. Could I resist a book that references feline private eye, Sue Slate?

Poetry

The Hang-Glider's Daughter by Marilyn Hacker, Onlywomen Press. Always brilliant, Hacker gives us more songs of every day life, each very seductive, full of romantic places and romance.

Two Women Revisited, The Poetry of Jeannette Foster and Valerie Taylor, Banned Books. The venerable Foster's (*Sex Variant Women In Literature*) songs to women from 1914 on, one actually reprinted from a 1935 "Ladder!" Storyteller Taylor's (*The Girls In Three-B, Prism*) wrenching social visions and memories turned to verse. A herstory collector's item.

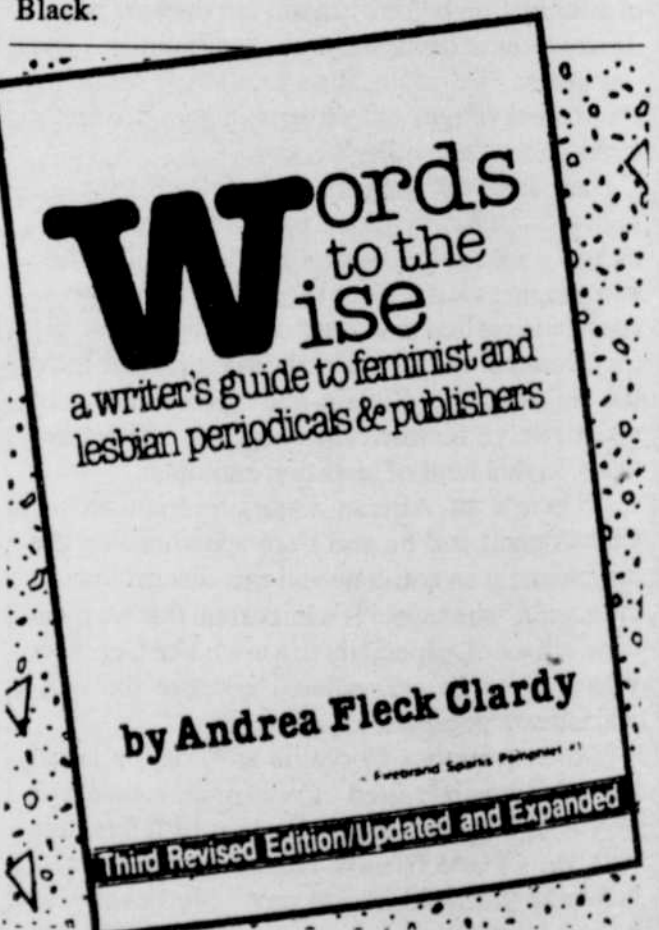
The Chant of the Women of Magdalena and the Magdalena Poems by SDiane Bogus, Women in the Moon. SDiane, of *Dykehands* fame, pens an ambitious and daring rhyming narrative poem about 32 women, escaped from prison, turned seafarers and settlers—in 1649. She adds separate poems about each of the journeyers.

Non-Fiction

Odd Girls and Twilight Lovers, A History of Lesbian Life in Twentieth-Century America by Lillian Faderman, Columbia University Press. Classic and highly readable discourse on US!

How Can I Help Her? Handbook for Husbands/Partners of Women Who Were Sexually Abused as Children by Joan Spear, Hazelden. Excellent, helpful, comforting in its supportive guidance.

Double Duty, Raised in an Alcoholic, Dysfunctional Family and Gay-Lesbian by Claudia Black, MAC Publishing. Long overdue, gay adult children share their own experience, strength and hope. Incisive comments and appendix by Black.



Words to the Wise, A Writer's Guide to Feminist and Lesbian Periodicals and Publishers by Andrea Fleck Clardy, Firebrand. A thorough updated tool any dyke writer needs.

Twice Blessed, On Being Lesbian or Gay and Jewish, edited by Christie Balka and Andy Rose, Beacon. Stories of the dual coming out process for gay Jews and the efforts of their religious institutions to accept/accommodate them.

Lady Lisa Lyon by Robert Mapplethorpe, St. Martin's Press. The late photographer's study of Lyon, the first World Women's Bodybuilding Champion, in all her guises.

Lee Lynch's newest novel is *That Old Studebaker*. (Naiad, 1991).

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