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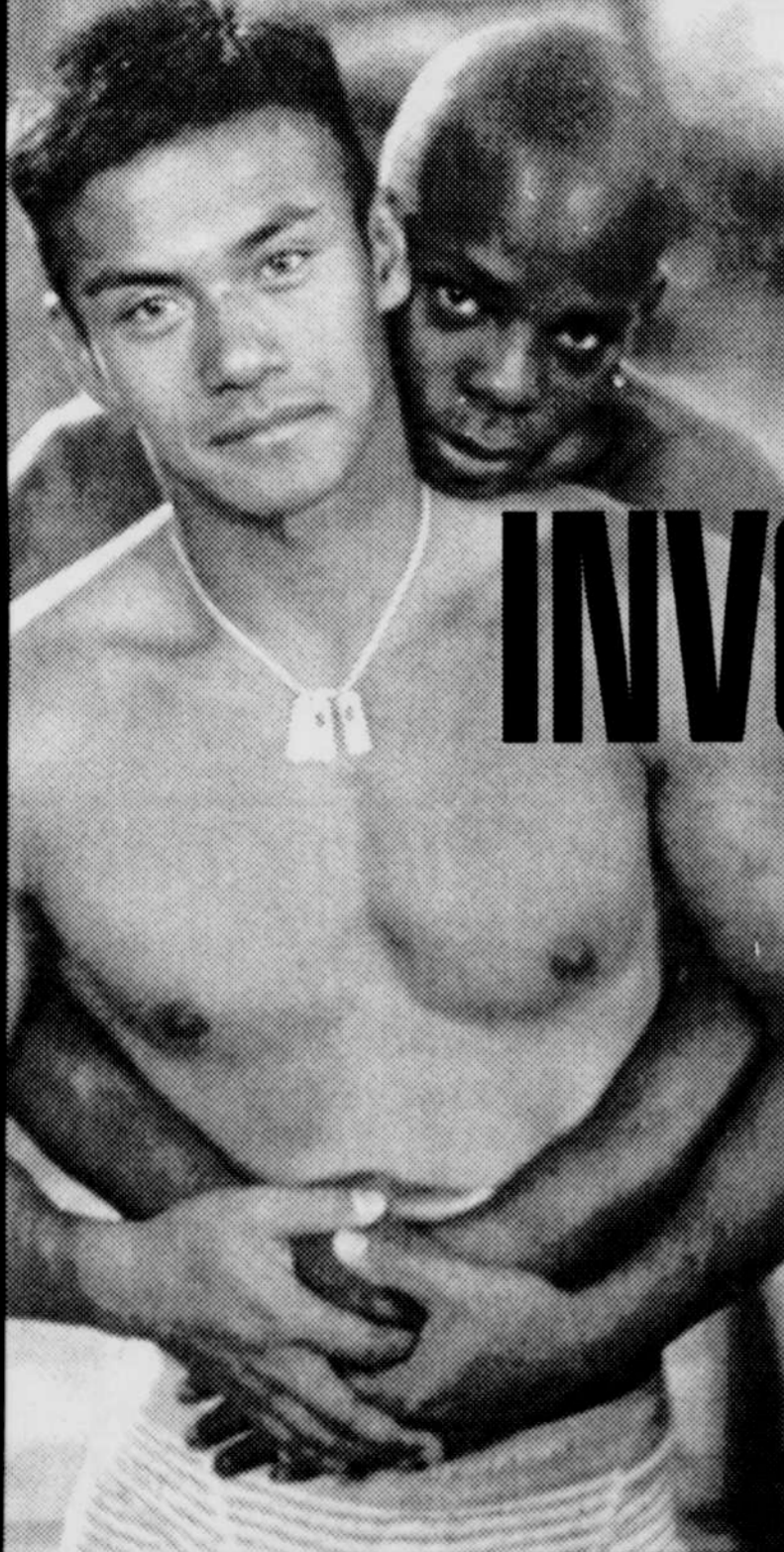
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BOOKS



Curl up with a good book

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Out magazine remarked that Mootoo "employs myth and magic reminiscent of Isabel Allende," and I would only add that Mootoo embellishes Allende's style with some very queer twists. Part mystery, part love story, *Cereus Blooms at Night* explores gender, sexuality, identity and post-colonialism without a trace of didacticism, but with a great deal of tender and exquisite beauty. —Catherine Sameh

SEVEN MOVES

By Carol Anshaw. Houghton Mifflin Co., 1997; \$11 softcover.

The first thing that struck me about *Seven Moves* by Carol Anshaw is how different it is from the predictable formulas of U-Haul romance gone wrong. This novel is a very introspective tale about our ability to project identities onto other people.

When Chris Snow's lover, Taylor, disappears one day with only her jeep and camera bag, Chris assumes it's because of the fight they had over Taylor's wandering ways. When Taylor doesn't return, Chris is led into a mystery and forced to confront the fact that Taylor's life is largely unknown to her.

Anshaw turns a mostly internal journey into an unpredictable ride that holds the reader's attention and makes the book difficult to put down. What I liked most about this book was not having a clue what would come next and Anshaw's unusual voice. The author has a unique writing style that is unexpectedly humorous, which makes it easy to get into her characters' heads and care what happens to them, as demonstrated by the following excerpt:

"My dog does the same thing," Taylor said. "Closes his eyes and puts his face straight into a breeze, for the pure pleasure." Then she brushed a few knuckles across Chris's cheek to illustrate the not-terribly-difficult-to-grasp concept of "breeze."

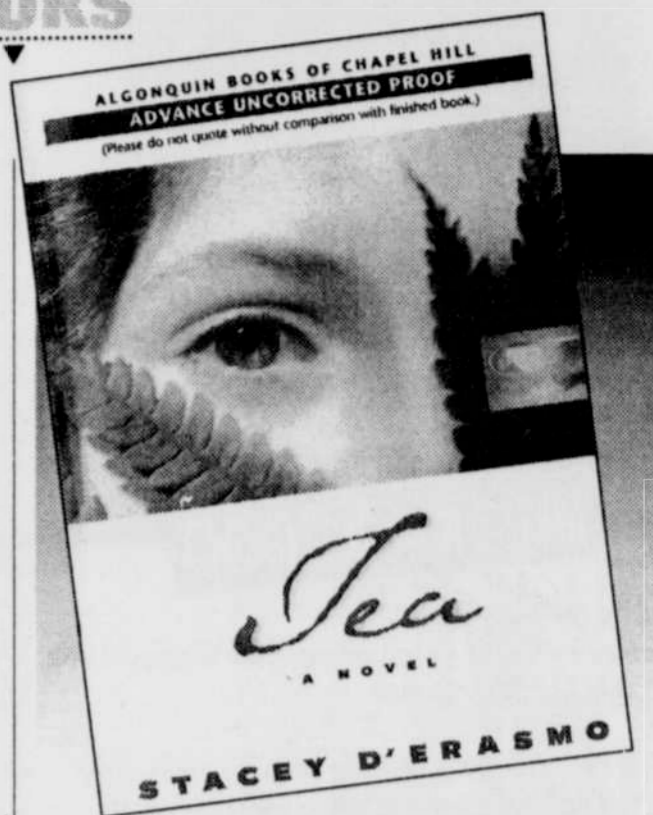
Chris fought down a nervous impulse to laugh. All through her coming out in boarding school and at college she had longed for precisely this cheesy sort of scenario, the sexually predatory woman, a vamp of the old school with a mastery of situation and technique. Someone who knew all the ropes, who'd brought the ropes along. Now, so many years and so many women down the line, this kind of thing seems purely comic.

This is a good book for a day when you can hibernate in your flannel jammies with some good snacks by your side. —Krona Adair

TEA

By Stacy D'Erasmus. Algonquin Books of Chapel Hill, 2000; \$21.95 hardcover.

An accomplished first novel by Stacey D'Erasmus, the former senior editor for the *Voice Literary Supplement*, *Tea* is the story of Isabel Gold, whose youth in the suburbs of Philadelphia is unsettled by her mother's sui-



cide. But Isabel is a survivor, and her adventurous spirit leads her to the city's theater world and into the arms of Rebecca, an older lesbian feminist activist. Through Rebecca, and their mutual involvement in theater, Isabel begins to come into her own lesbian womanhood and creativity, setting her sights on New York, filmmaking and further romantic escapades.

D'Erasmus fills the story with great tenderness and imagination—every birthday after her mother's death, Isabel imagines what her mother might have given her—and wrestles with the complexity of family life, suicide and the growing pains of becoming an adult. Provocative, lyrical and erotic, *Tea* is a triumph. —CS

THE HOURS

By Michael Cunningham. Picador USA, 2000; \$13 softcover.

OK, so the author is a gay man—but he's trapped in a lesbian and feminist body! The 1999 Pulitzer Prize winner for fiction, *The Hours* draws inventively on the life and work of Virginia Woolf to tell the story of two modern American women who are trying to make rewarding lives for themselves in spite of all the daily demands they face.

Living in present-day Greenwich Village, lesbian book editor Clarissa Vaughan is planning a party for her ailing friend, Richard. Laura Brown is a housewife in postwar California, raising a son and questioning the confines of her marriage. With ease and beauty, Cunningham makes the two women's lives converge with Virginia Woolf's in a surprising and wrenching way during the party for Richard.

Sex, sexuality, literature, the meaning of life, of a day, of an hour, all fall under the thoughtful treatment of a gifted and sensitive writer. If you read any book this year, read *The Hours*. —CS

■ KRONDA ADAIR is a new reviewer and on staff at *In Other Words Women's Books and Resources*.

