



Kathleen Bryson's writing has been described as "like Margaret Atwood on acid."



Beren deMotier and her partner briefly considered moving to Canada in pursuit of marriage equality.



Morgan Hunt tries to keep her mystery novels engaging, zippy and realistic.



Through her mother's passing, Linda Wagner realized she had the key to unlock the door to her own creativity.

Women on the Verge

Queer Oregon authors dip into the pink ink

Breakdowns and Breakthroughs

The intimate art of Kathleen Bryson

by Tony LeTigre

Able to move with ease between media, Kathleen Bryson is one of those multifarious talents that Portland attracts like moths to a benevolent flame. She is binational, bisexual and bilingual, and she is or has been an author, editor, actor, director, painter, riot grrrl, model, anthropologist, linguist and abundant storehouse of arcane information. (A few days after I interviewed her for this article, she joined my little crew for the filming of a short movie at the Washougal River; during the course of the day she cursed in Finnish, discussed the finer points of Neanderthal cranial formation with my male lead, and took off her high heels to scuffle barefoot down a steep rocky slope.)

Somewhat controversially, Bryson has publicly espoused a social-constructionist view of sexuality that considers both homo- and heterosexuality to be the result of complex social and environmental factors rather than inherent genetic traits. While this might seem threatening or even perfidious to some who base their identities on an assumption of biological determinism, it is in fact more radical and less apologetic than the sentiment informing mainstream gay and lesbian political ideology. For instance, in a 2002 interview with Rainbow Network, the biggest queer Web

site in the United Kingdom, Bryson asserted, "I choose to be queer, and I'm proud of my choice. I'm sick of gay people saying, 'It's not my fault,' like being queer is something to be ashamed of."

It was during her enforced exile in Britain in the late '90s, in the midst of a visa imbroglio, that Bryson wrote her first novel, *Mush*, which was published by Diva Books in 2001. Reviewers and readers variously described it as "stunningly good," "beautiful and compulsive" and "like Margaret Atwood on acid" while cautioning that it was "definitely not for those who like to read about fluffy bunnies and sip a cup of Horlicks before bed." It won her a two-book deal, the first fruit of which is *Girl on a Stick* (She-Devil Press, 2007; \$16.95 softcover).

The protagonist of *Girl on a Stick* is Clementine Logan, a jaded American with flame-red hair sojourning in London at the turn of the millennium, who forms an intense relationship with a beautiful Norwegian boy named Per. (Warning: Plot spoilers ahead.) Their relationship seems on the verge of tearing both of them apart throughout the course of its three-year slow-motion car crash, with indiscretions, infidelities and histrionics on both sides. Superimposed over the sexy ups and delirious downs of their stormy coupling are Clementine's disturbing childhood memories of abuse



Kathleen Bryson celebrates the release of her subversive love story *Girl on a Stick*.

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