

Cambridge University Press  
978-1-107-05400-4 - The Cambridge Companion to Lesbian Literature  
Edited by Jodie Medd  
Frontmatter  
[More information](#)

---

THE CAMBRIDGE COMPANION TO  
LESBIAN LITERATURE

*The Cambridge Companion to Lesbian Literature* examines literary representations of lesbian sexuality, identities, and communities, from the medieval period to the present. In addition to providing a helpful orientation to key literary-historical periods, critical concepts, theoretical debates, and literary genres, this *Companion* considers the work of such well-known authors as Virginia Woolf, Adrienne Rich, Audre Lorde, and Sarah Waters. Written by a host of leading critics and covering subjects as diverse as lesbian desire in the long eighteenth century and same-sex love in a postcolonial context, this *Companion* delivers insight into the variety of traditions that have shaped the present landscape of lesbian literature.

Jodie Medd is Associate Professor of English at Carleton University in Ottawa. She is the author of *Lesbian Scandal and the Culture of Modernism* (Cambridge University Press, 2012) as well as essays on queer sexuality and modernism.

*A complete list of books in the series is at the back of this book.*

Cambridge University Press

978-1-107-05400-4 - The Cambridge Companion to Lesbian Literature

Edited by Jodie Medd

Frontmatter

[More information](#)

---

Cambridge University Press

978-1-107-05400-4 - The Cambridge Companion to Lesbian Literature

Edited by Jodie Medd

Frontmatter

[More information](#)

---

THE CAMBRIDGE  
COMPANION TO  
LESBIAN LITERATURE

Cambridge University Press

978-1-107-05400-4 - The Cambridge Companion to Lesbian Literature

Edited by Jodie Medd

Frontmatter

[More information](#)

---

Cambridge University Press

978-1-107-05400-4 - The Cambridge Companion to Lesbian Literature

Edited by Jodie Medd

Frontmatter

[More information](#)

---

THE CAMBRIDGE  
COMPANION TO  
LESBIAN  
LITERATURE

EDITED BY  
JODIE MEDD  
*Carleton University*



CAMBRIDGE  
UNIVERSITY PRESS

Cambridge University Press  
 978-1-107-05400-4 - The Cambridge Companion to Lesbian Literature  
 Edited by Jodie Medd  
 Frontmatter  
[More information](#)

**CAMBRIDGE**  
 UNIVERSITY PRESS

32 Avenue of the Americas, New York, NY 10013-2473, USA

Cambridge University Press is part of the University of Cambridge.

It furthers the University's mission by disseminating knowledge in the pursuit of education, learning, and research at the highest international levels of excellence.

[www.cambridge.org](http://www.cambridge.org)

Information on this title: [www.cambridge.org/9781107054004](http://www.cambridge.org/9781107054004)

© Cambridge University Press 2015

This publication is in copyright. Subject to statutory exception and to the provisions of relevant collective licensing agreements, no reproduction of any part may take place without the written permission of Cambridge University Press.

First published 2015

Printed in the United States of America

*A catalog record for this publication is available from the British Library.*

*Library of Congress Cataloging in Publication Data*

The Cambridge companion to lesbian literature / [edited by]

Jodie Medd, Carleton University.

pages cm. – (Cambridge Companions to Literature)

Includes bibliographical references and index.

ISBN 978-1-107-05400-4 (hardback)

1. Lesbianism in literature. 2. Lesbians' writings – History and criticism.

3. Homosexuality and literature. I. Medd, Jodie, 1971– editor.

PN56.L45C36 2015

809'.9335206643–dc23 2015023751

ISBN 978-1-107-05400-4 Hardback

Cambridge University Press has no responsibility for the persistence or accuracy of URLs for external or third-party Internet Web sites referred to in this publication and does not guarantee that any content on such Web sites is, or will remain, accurate or appropriate.

CONTENTS

<i>List of Figures</i>	<i>page</i> ix
<i>Notes on Contributors</i>	xi
<i>Acknowledgments</i>	xv
<i>Chronology</i>	xvii
 Lesbian Literature?: An Introduction JODIE MEDD	 I
 PART I IN THEORY/IN DEBATE: CONNECTIONS, COMPARISONS, AND CONTESTATIONS	
1 The Queer Time of Lesbian Literature: History and Temporality CARLA FRECCERO	19
2 Debating Definitions: The Lesbian in Feminist Studies and Queer Studies ANNAMARIE JAGOSE	32
3 Experience, Difference, and Power SANDRA K. SOTO	45
4 Global Desires, Postcolonial Critique: Queer Women in Nation, Migration, and Diaspora SHAMIRA A. MEGHANI	60
 PART II IN THE PAST: READING THE LITERARY ARCHIVE	
5 Situating Female Same-Sex Love in the Middle Ages KARMA LOCHRIE	79
6 “Bedfellowes in Royaltie”: Early/Modern Sapphic Representations SUSAN S. LANSER	93
	vii

CONTENTS

7	Writing Lesbian Desire in the Long Eighteenth Century CAROLINE GONDA	107
8	Lesbian Postmortem at the Fin de Siècle KATE THOMAS	122
PART III ON THE PAGE: MODERN GENRES		
9	Modern Times, Modernist Writing, Modern Sexualities MADELYN DETLOFF	139
10	Popular Genres and Lesbian (Sub)Cultures: From Pulp to Crime, and Beyond KAYE MITCHELL	154
11	Lesbian Autobiography and Memoir MONICA B. PEARL	169
12	Lesbianism-Poetry//Poetry-Lesbianism AMY SARA CARROLL	188
13	Contemporary Lesbian Fiction: Into the Twenty-First Century EMMA PARKER	204
14	Comics, Graphic Narratives, and Lesbian Lives HEIKE BAUER	219
	<i>Guide to Further Reading</i>	237
	<i>Index</i>	247



FIGURES

1	Cover image of <i>Hothead Paisan</i> by Diane DiMassa	<i>page</i> 224
2	From <i>Fun Home: A Family Tragicomic</i> by Alison Bechdel	228
3	From <i>Tangles: A Story of Alzheimer’s, My Mother and Me</i> by Sarah Leavitt	230

Cambridge University Press

978-1-107-05400-4 - The Cambridge Companion to Lesbian Literature

Edited by Jodie Medd

Frontmatter

[More information](#)

---

## NOTES ON CONTRIBUTORS

HEIKE BAUER, Senior Lecturer in English and Gender Studies at Birkbeck, has research interests in fiction and the modern history of sexuality, translation, and lesbian, queer, and feminist graphic narratives. She has published three books, including the monograph *English Literary Sexology, 1860–1930* (2009). She has coedited, with Churnjeet Mahn, the special issue, ‘Transnational Lesbian Cultures,’ *Journal of Lesbian Studies* 18.3 (2014), and is currently completing an AHRC-funded study, *A Violent World of Difference: Magnus Hirschfeld and Queer Modernity*.

AMY SARA CARROLL is an Assistant Professor of American Culture, Latina/o Studies, and English at the University of Michigan, Ann Arbor, and the author of two collections of poetry, *SECESSION* (Hyperbole Books, 2012) and *FANNIE + FREDDIE/The Sentimentality of Post-9/11 Pornography* (2013) and one scholarly monograph, *REMEX: Toward an Art History of the NAFTA Era* (forthcoming).

MADELYN DETLOFF is Associate Professor of English and Women’s, Gender, and Sexuality Studies at Miami University at Oxford, Ohio. Her work includes *The Persistence of Modernism: Loss and Mourning in the 20th Century* (2009) and several essays on queer studies, modernist studies, and feminist theory and pedagogy. Her next book, *The Value of Woolf*, is forthcoming.

CARLA FRECCERO is Professor and Chair of Literature and History of Consciousness, and Professor of Feminist Studies at UC Santa Cruz. She specializes in early modern continental history and literature, feminist and queer theory, and animal studies. Her most recent book is *Queer/Early/Modern* (2006), and *Species/Race/Sex*, a special issue of *American Quarterly* (2013), coedited with Claire Jean Kim. Her current project is *Animal Inscription: Figuring the Nonhuman*.

CAROLINE GONDA is a Fellow and Director of Studies in English at St. Catharine’s College, Cambridge. Her publications include *Reading Daughters’ Fictions, 1709–1834: Novels and Society from Manley to Edgeworth* (2005) and two coedited books, *Queer People: Negotiations and Expressions of Homosexuality*

## NOTES ON CONTRIBUTORS

1700–1800 (2007) (with Chris Mounsey) and *Lesbian Dames: Sapphism in the Long Eighteenth Century* (2010) (with John C. Beynon).

ANNAMARIE JAGOSE is Professor and Head of the School of Letters, Arts and Media at the University of Sydney. She is the author of *Orgasmology* (2013), a queer retracing of the emergence of modern sex across the long twentieth century through the unlikely object of orgasm.

SUSAN S. LANSER is Professor of Comparative Literature, English, and Women's and Sexuality Studies at Brandeis University. Her scholarship encompasses eighteenth-century European culture, gender and sexuality, and narrative theory. She is the author of numerous essays, two scholarly editions, and three monographs: *The Narrative Act* (1981), *Fictions of Authority* (1992), and *The Sexuality of History: Modernity and the Sapphic, 1565–1830* (2014).

KARMA LOCHRIE is Professor of English and Medieval Studies at Indiana University. She is the author of *Heterosyncrasies: Female Sexuality When Normal Wasn't* (2005) and of numerous essays on gender and sexuality in the Middle Ages.

JODIE MEDD is Associate Professor of English at Carleton University in Ottawa. She is the author of *Lesbian Scandal and the Culture of Modernism* (2012) as well as essays on queer sexuality and modernism.

SHAMIRA A. MEGHANI has taught at the Universities of Sussex and Leeds, and writes on literature, film, and culture in queer postcolonial contexts. With interests in transformative figures, ethno-raciality, gender, sexuality, and resistance, her work explores representations of sexual dissidence, rights, and restrictions in postcolonial constructs of nation, migration, and diaspora.

KAYE MITCHELL is Senior Lecturer in Contemporary Literature at the University of Manchester. She is the author of two books – *A.L. Kennedy* (2007) and *Intention and Text* (2008) – and editor of a third, *Sarah Waters* (2013). Her work in progress includes a monograph on the politics and poetics of shame in contemporary literature, as well as a special issue of *Contemporary Women's Writing* on experimental writing by women.

EMMA PARKER is Senior Lecturer in English at the University of Leicester. She is the editor of *Contemporary British Women Writers* (2004), coeditor (with Mary Eagleton) of *The Palgrave History of British Women's Writing, 1970–Present* (2015), and coeditor (with Suzanne Keen) of the journal *Contemporary Women's Writing*.

MONICA B. PEARL is Lecturer in Twentieth Century American Literature at the University of Manchester, UK. She is the author of *AIDS Literature and Gay Identity: The Literature of Loss* (2013) as well as essays on Alison Bechdel's *Fun*

Cambridge University Press  
978-1-107-05400-4 - The Cambridge Companion to Lesbian Literature  
Edited by Jodie Medd  
Frontmatter  
[More information](#)

---

## NOTES ON CONTRIBUTORS

*Home*, *Angels in America*, the AIDS Quilt, Audre Lorde's *Zami*, Janet Flanner's letters, Eve Kosofsky Sedgwick, W.G. Sebald, and opera.

SANDRA K. SOTO is Associate Professor of Gender and Women's Studies at the University of Arizona and editor of *Feminist Formations*. Her research and teaching interests include Chicana/o and Latina/o literary and cultural studies, feminist and queer theory, and critical ethnic studies. Her book, *Reading Chican@ Like a Queer: The De-Mastery of Desire* (2010), replaces the race-based oppositional paradigm of Chicano literary studies with a less didactic, more flexible framework geared for a queer analysis of racialized sexuality.

KATE THOMAS is Associate Professor of English at Bryn Mawr College. The author of *Postal Pleasures: Sex, Scandal and Victorian Letters* (2012), she has also published articles on queer temporality, lesbian poetics, and nineteenth-century potboiler fiction. Her current project is on the industrialization of food and culture and is entitled "Victorians Fat and Thin."

Cambridge University Press

978-1-107-05400-4 - The Cambridge Companion to Lesbian Literature

Edited by Jodie Medd

Frontmatter

[More information](#)

---

## ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

This volume belongs to its brilliant, responsive, patient, understanding, and relentlessly good-humored contributors. This project gave me the opportunity to work with scholars whose writing I have long admired, to reconnect with old acquaintances whose memories and sassy prose bring me great delight, and to discover scholars who are not only thoughtful and careful literary critics but also generous and gracious correspondents. What a pleasure this has been.

I thank Ray Ryan for inviting me to be involved in this project to a degree that I could not have imagined possible. Gill Plain was an early co-conspirator, and her warm and witty cross-Atlantic e-mail collaboration got things off the ground. Alichia Keddy's early bibliographic research assistance served me well, Susan Lanser's timely advice and corrections on the Chronology were invaluable, and Mary Newberry's indexing expertise once again saved my sanity. Laura Doan and Valerie Traub provided invaluable support and feedback on the proposal, as did other anonymous reviewers. I am extremely grateful. Hugh Stevens, Emma Parker, Kate Thomas, and Amy Sara Carroll offered helpful and heartening advice as this volume was taking shape and Valerie Traub and Susan Lanser extended an irresistible and much appreciated invitation to attend a workshop on lesbian representation. Barbara Leckie listened, sympathized, and offered encouragement and sane advice whenever I needed it.

Finally, I give my loving and exuberant thanks, again and again, to Nick, Amelia, and Audrey: you *are* the pot of gold at the end of the rainbow.

Cambridge University Press

978-1-107-05400-4 - The Cambridge Companion to Lesbian Literature

Edited by Jodie Medd

Frontmatter

[More information](#)

---



## CHRONOLOGY

This *very limited* chronology highlights select literary works in English (primarily American and British), while noting some texts in other languages, including early sources. Dates prioritize book publication rather than composition, circulation, or serial dates. Selected historical events and political activism are also included.

- |                                      |   |
|--------------------------------------|---|
| Unknown                              | Hebrew Bible, Book of Ruth: Ruth vows her commitment to Naomi, her mother-in-law, after both are widowed: “Where you go I will go, and where you stay I will stay. Your people will be my people and your God my God. Where you die I will die, and there I will be buried. May the LORD deal with me, be it ever so severely, if even death separates you and me.” |
| Bronze Age<br>(c. 3000–<br>1200 BCE) | According to Homer and other classical sources, Amazons, a society of female warriors, populated the area around the Black Sea. Amazonian tales appear in literatures across the continents and centuries.  |
| c. 610–580<br>BCE                    | Life of Sappho of Lesbos, whose nine books of lyric poetry, of which approximately 200 fragments exist, include poems expressing desire for women.  |
| c. 8 CE                              | Ovid, <i>Metamorphoses</i> , Ninth Book, includes the story of Iphis, a girl raised as a boy, who is betrothed to Ianthe. The goddess Isis transforms Iphis into a boy so the wedding can go ahead. The tale is reworked throughout literary history.   |
| c. 80–90                             | Martial, <i>Epigrams</i> (particularly books 1 and 7), with satirical references to tribadism, cunnilingus, and other sex acts between women.   |

## CHRONOLOGY

- c. 100–115 Juvenal, Sixth Satire, “On Women,” includes orgiastic sex between women as evidence of women’s sexual excesses.
- c. 165–180 Lucian, *Dialogues of Hetaerae* (Courtesans): comic dialogues including a confession of a courtesan’s seduction by her female friend.  
Alciphron (speculated as Lucian’s contemporary), *Letters*, with tales of courtesans and their female friends pairing off together.
- 914 Byzantine scholar Arethas, in a commentary on a second-century Christian text, equates *Lesbiai* with *tribades* and *hetairistriae* as terms for women who have sex with women.
- 1098–1179 Life of Hildegard of Bingen, mystic and theologian, whose writings both condemn sex between women and express her passionate devotion to a nun.
- 1208–1213 Robert of Flamborough, *Liber Poenitentialis* (*Book of Penitence*), assigns seven-year penance for fornication between women.
- 1390–1392 John Gower, *Confessio Amantis* (*The Lover’s Confession*), includes the tale of “Iphis and Ianthe,” based on Ovid’s *Metamorphoses*.
- 1431 Execution of Joan of Arc, condemned by the British as a “relapsed heretic” for wearing men’s clothing, among other crimes.
- 1516, 1532 Ludovico Ariosto, *Orlando Furioso*: in Canto 25 a princess falls in love with a female warrior whom she mistakes for a man.
- 1590 Sir Philip Sidney, *The Countess of Pembroke’s Arcadia*: a male character’s female disguise raises the potential for, and reflections upon, female homoeroticism.
- 1592 John Lyly, *Gallathea*: two girls, disguised as boys, fall in love, each believing the other to be male. Recalling Ovid’s “Iphis and Ianthe,” Venus promises to turn one into a man so that they can marry.
- 1600, 1602 Shakespeare, *As You Like It* and *Twelfth Night*: comedies in which women fall in love with women in male disguise.

## CHRONOLOGY

Such female-cross dressing characters were common on stage in the period.

- 1611 Thomas Dekker and Thomas Middleton, *The Roaring Girl*: a Jacobean comedy about Mary Frith, also known as Moll Cutpurse, a cross-dressing, swashbuckling, and gallant rogue of London's underworld. See also the anonymously published "diary" of her life, *The Life and Death of Mrs. Mary Frith, Commonly Called Moll Cutpurse* (1662).
- 1633 John Donne, "Elegy: Sapho to Philaenis": a dramatic monologue of Sapho's longing for her female beloved.
- 1640 Ben Jonson, "Epigram on the Court Purcelle": composed in 1609 and circulated privately though published only posthumously, includes one of the first English appearances of the term "tribade" in English (from the Greek, "to rub").
- 1650 Andrew Marvell, "Upon Appleton House": a country-house poem that recalls the house's history as a convent populated by lascivious, virgin-seducing nuns.
- 1664, 1667 Katherine Philips, *Poems. By the Incomparable, Mrs. K.P* (unauthorized) and *Poems By the Most Deservedly Admired Mrs. Katherine Philips, the Matchless Orinda* (published posthumously), reflecting passionate female friendships with women. Others of the "romantic friendship" school include Anne Killigrew (1660–1685), Anne Finch, Countess of Winchilsea (1661–1720), and Elizabeth Singer Rowe (1674–1737).
- 1665–1666 Pierre de Bourdeille, Seigneur de Brantôme, posthumously published memoirs, *Vies des dames gallantes* (*Lives of Gallant Ladies*): chapter 16 addresses various sexual possibilities between women.
- 1668 Margaret Cavendish, *The Convent of Pleasure*: a drama in which Lady Happy withdraws from the world of men to an all-female space only to fall in love with a princess, who is a prince in disguise.
- 1684–1692 Aphra Behn, love poems addressed to women (including posthumous publication).
- 1709 Mary Delarivier Manley, *Secret Memoirs and Manners of Several Persons of Quality, of Both Sexes. From the New*

Cambridge University Press

978-1-107-05400-4 - The Cambridge Companion to Lesbian Literature

Edited by Jodie Medd

Frontmatter

[More information](#)

## CHRONOLOGY

*Atalantis, an Island in the Mediterranean*: a satire detailing the “excess of amity” among an all-female aristocratic society; characteristic for the period in its suggestion that Queen Anne was overly influenced by her female friendships.

- 1712 Alexander Pope, translation, “Sappho to Phaon,” from Ovid’s *Heroides*: Sappho’s complaint over her betrayal by the boatman Phaon includes frank references to her female beloveds. One of many new translations of and references to Sappho in the period.
- 1723 Jane Barker, “The Unaccountable Wife,” in *Patch-Work Screen for the Ladies*: a tale of a wife devoted to the servant who had become her husband’s mistress.
- 1740–1741; Samuel Richardson, *Pamela*, *Clarissa*, and *Sir Charles*  
1748–1748; *Grandison*: epistolary novels representing desire between  
1753–1754 women, from praising passionate female friendship to denouncing and satirizing “unnatural” masculine women.
- 1743–1744 Anonymous, *The Entertaining Travels and Adventures of Mademoiselle de Richelieu*: the narrator and her female beloved enjoy cross-dressing adventures across Europe, then resume their female dress and settle down together.
- 1746 Henry Fielding, *The Female Husband*: a sensationalizing pamphlet based on the case of Mary Hamilton, arrested for impersonating a man and marrying a woman.
- 1748–1749 John Cleland, *Memoirs of a Woman of Pleasure*, also known as *Fanny Hill*: the protagonist is initiated into her profession by her female colleague. Cleland is also attributed with the 1755 translation of *The True History and Adventures of Catharine Vizzani*, by an Italian surgeon who dissected the body of a woman who enjoyed amorous adventures with women while cross-dressing as a man.
- c. 1749 Anonymous, *The Sappho-an. An Heroic Poem, of Three Cantos*: a satiric portrayal of Sappho arguing for, and demonstrating, the pleasures of female same-sex activities to the goddesses of Olympus.
- 1755 Charlotte Charke, *A Narrative of the Life of Mrs. Charlotte Charke*: an autobiography featuring Charke’s cross-dressing,

Cambridge University Press

978-1-107-05400-4 - The Cambridge Companion to Lesbian Literature

Edited by Jodie Medd

Frontmatter

[More information](#)

## CHRONOLOGY

both on stage as an actor and off stage as “Mr. Brown” with her companion, “Mrs. Brown.”

- 1762 Sarah Scott, *Millenium Hall*: a privileged community of women choose friendship and charity work over marriage. Elizabeth Carter, *Poems on Several Occasions*, with poems addressed to female friends, by a bluestocking feminist.
- 1778 Eleanor Butler and Sarah Ponsonby elope to a village in Wales. As the “Ladies of Llangollen,” their shared life for the next fifty years (recorded in their journals and letters) was a model of romantic friendship that attracted famous visitors and poetic tributes.
- 1789 The height of pamphlet attacks on Marie-Antoinette, with accusations of sapphic relations.
- 1796 Anna Seward, *Llangollen Vale, Inscribed to the Right Honourable Lady Eleanor Butler, and Miss Ponsonby*, celebrating the “sacred friendship” of the Ladies of Llangollen. Seward’s other poetry reference her own passionate female friendships.
- Denis Diderot, *La Religieuse (The Nun)*: a lascivious Mother Superior preys on a young inmate in this anticlerical novel.
- 1801 Maria Edgeworth, *Belinda*, includes a satirical portrait of Harriot Freke, whose overtures to the novel’s heroine ostensibly contrast with Belinda’s own female romantic friendships.
- 1810 Marianne Woods and Jane Pirie, headmistresses of a girls’ boarding school, sue Dame Helen Cumming Gordon for libel in Edinburgh for accusing them of lewd and indecent sexual behavior.
- 1816 Samuel Taylor Coleridge, “Christabel”: the eponymous heroine spends a vaguely guilt-inducing night in the arms of the eerily seductive Geraldine.
- 1817–1836 Anne Lister, selected diaries (published posthumously in 1980s and 1990s): coded passages record Lister’s sexual liaisons with various women.
- 1824 William Wordsworth, “To the Lady E.G. and the hon. Miss P., Composed in the Grounds of Plas Newydd, Near Llangollen, 1824,” commemorating the Ladies of Llangollen.

Cambridge University Press

978-1-107-05400-4 - The Cambridge Companion to Lesbian Literature

Edited by Jodie Medd

Frontmatter

[More information](#)

## CHRONOLOGY

- 1835 Honoré de Balzac, *La Fille aux yeux d'or* (*The Girl with the Golden Eyes*): a man falls in love with a girl kept by a jealous female lover.  
Théophile Gautier, *Mademoiselle de Maupin*: the heroine, disguised as a man, attracts the love of a male artist and his mistress.
- 1851 Emily Dickinson writes the first of many erotically charged verses addressed to “She” and sends impassioned letters and poetry to her sister-in-law and former schoolmate, Susan Gilbert Dickinson.
- 1857 Charles Baudelaire, *Les Fleurs du mal* (*Flowers of Evil*), with influential sapphic poems.  
Charles Dickens, *Little Dorrit*: Miss Wade, a minor but perversely drawn character, establishes a temporary partnership with, and disturbing influence over, the lowerclass Tattycoram.
- 1862 Christina Rossetti, “Goblin Market”: a provocatively homoerotic and didactically devout endorsement of passionate heroic sister-love.
- 1866 Algernon Charles Swinburne, *Poems and Ballads*, with lesbian-tinged verses and “Anactoria,” a dramatic monologue by Sappho to her lover. Swinburne’s unfinished novel *Lesbia Brandon* (1864–1867) is also suggestively sapphic.
- 1867 Paul Verlaine, *Les Amies, scènes d’amour sapphique* (*The Friends, scenes of sapphic love*): six lesbian-themed poems.
- 1872 Sheridan LeFanu, *Carmilla*: archetypal lesbian vampire thriller, recalling Coleridge’s “Christabel.”
- 1877 Sarah Orne Jewett, *Deephaven*: two friends from Boston summer together in a seaside town, anticipating Jewett’s longer-term “Boston marriage” with Annie Adams Fields.
- 1880 Émile Zola, *Nana*, best-known of Zola’s naturalist-realism, features sapphic prostitutes and a lesbian bar. More lesbian-prostitute moral squalor follows in Guy de Maupassant’s 1881 short story, “Paul’s Mistress.”
- 1884 Katherine Harris Bradley and her niece Edith Cooper publish their first work under the collective name Michael Field.

CHRONOLOGY

- 1886 Henry James, *The Bostonians*: a feminist's passion for her talented protégée is thwarted by her virile cousin from the South.
- 1894 Pierre Louÿs, *Chansons de Bilitis* (*The Songs of Bilitis*): erotic prose vignettes purportedly by a member of Sappho's female circle, but actually composed by Louÿs.  
 Angelina Weld Grimké writes her earliest love letters to women. Her poetry was anthologized in the Harlem Renaissance, but most of her (same-sex) love lyrics were unpublished during her life.
- 1895 John Wesley Cahart, *Norma Trist, or Pure Carbon: A Story of the Inversion of the Sexes*: a young woman in Texas is tried for the attempted murder of her recently engaged female lover; inspired by Alice Mitchell's 1892 jealousy-murder of her female beloved.
- 1896 Willa Cather, "Tommy the Unsentimental," whose protagonist is one of Cather's queerest female characters.
- c. 1898 Pauline Tarn moves from England to Paris, renaming herself Renée Vivien to mark her "rebirth" as a writer and sapphist.
- 1913–1927 Marcel Proust, *À la recherche du temps perdu* (*Remembrance of Things Past*): multivolume autobiographical fiction, with sapphic scenes and characters, including the narrator's unrequited object of desire, Albertine.
- 1915 D.H. Lawrence, *The Rainbow*, with its sapphic swimming scene in the chapter "Shame," is suppressed as obscene. Lawrence later pens *The Fox* (1923), in which a soldier returning from the war disrupts the domestic partnership of two women struggling to run a farm.
- 1916 Charlotte Mew, *The Farmer's Bride* (expanded 1921): a poetry collection critically admired by modernist contemporaries that suggests the emotional complexity of sapphic love, loss, and isolation.
- 1917 Clemence Dane (Winifred Ashton), *Regiment of Women*: a dangerously manipulative girls' school headmistress sets her sights on a young teacher.

CHRONOLOGY

- 1919 Amy Lowell, *Pictures of the Floating World*, includes some of Lowell's most explicit lesbian lyrics, inspired by her relationship with Ada Russell.
- 1920S–1930S Blues songs performed by Bessie Smith, Gertrude “Ma” Rainey, Ethel Waters, Alberta Hunter, Gladys Bentley, Jackie “Moms” Mabley, Bessie Jackson, and Monette Moore include explicit or implicit lesbian references.
- 1920 Vita Sackville-West, best known for her relationship with Virginia Woolf, writes a memoir of her tumultuous affair with Violet Trefusis, published posthumously in Nigel Nicolson's *Portrait of a Marriage* (1973).  
 Katherine Mansfield, “Bliss”: a homoerotic short story by a New Zealand-born modernist.  
 Sigmund Freud, English translation of *The Psychogenesis of a Case of Homosexuality in a Woman*.
- 1921 H.D. (Hilda Doolittle), whose poetry includes reworkings of Sappho, writes *Paint It Today*, one of three autobiographical novels addressing her relationships with both women and men, unpublished during her life.  
 A proposal to add “acts of gross indecency between women” to British criminal law is defeated in the House of Lords.
- 1923 A Broadway performance of Sholem Asch's *God of Vengeance* (*Got fun nekome*, 1907), about a Polish girl who falls in love with a prostitute, is shut down as obscene.
- 1925 Janet Flanner, a key figure among expatriate sapphic modernists in Paris, publishes her first “Letter from Paris” in the *New Yorker*.
- 1927 Elizabeth Bowen, *The Hotel*: Bowen's debut novel features a young woman's intense crush on an older woman.
- 1928 Radclyffe Hall, *The Well of Loneliness*: the story of a tragic female invert is banned as obscene in a high-profile censorship trial in England.  
 Virginia Woolf, *Orlando*: a fantasy biography of Woolf's erstwhile lover, Vita Sackville-West. Much of Woolf's writing has been read in light of her same-sex interests.



Cambridge University Press

978-1-107-05400-4 - The Cambridge Companion to Lesbian Literature

Edited by Jodie Medd

Frontmatter

[More information](#)

## CHRONOLOGY

Djuna Barnes, *Ladies Almanack*: a playful satire and celebration of Paris's expatriate sapphic community.

Compton Mackenzie, *Extraordinary Women*: a satire of sapphic escapades on the vacation island of Sirène (Capri).

1929 Natalie Clifford Barney, *Aventures de l'esprit* (*Adventures of the Mind*): memoirs by the American heiress whose Paris salon, featured in Barnes's *Ladies Almanack*, was a literary and sapphic hub.

Nella Larsen, *Passing*, recounts an African-American woman's fascination with her childhood friend who passes for white.

1932 Sidonie Gabrielle Colette, *Le Pur et l'impur* (*The Pure and the Impure*): reflections on varieties of sexual love, with portraits of lesbian love including Renée Vivien and the Ladies of Llangollen.

1933 Gertrude Stein, *The Autobiography of Alice B. Toklas*, celebrating Stein's Parisian home with Toklas as a center of literary and artistic activity. Stein's oeuvre, particularly unpublished or posthumously published writing, explicitly addresses lesbian relationships and desire.

1934 Lillian Hellman, *The Children's Hour*: a drama based on the Pirie-Woods case, in which a schoolgirl accuses the female co-owners of a boarding school of inappropriate relations.

1934 J. M. Farrell (Molly Keane), *Devoted Ladies*: a darkly satiric novel of a doomed relationship between two wealthy women.

Henry Handel Richardson (Ethel Florence Lindesay Richardson), *The End of Childhood*: a short story collection with lesbian content. *The Getting of Wisdom* (1910) is also noteworthy for its boarding schoolgirl romantic friendships.

1936 Djuna Barnes, *Nightwood*: Barnes's best-known work, about the relationship between two American women in Paris.

Sylvia Townsend Warner, *Summer Will Show*: a British woman falls in love with her husband's Parisian mistress during the 1848 Revolution.

1940 Carson McCullers, *The Heart is a Lonely Hunter*, and later *The Member of the Wedding* (1946): appealing tomboy

CHRONOLOGY

- characters intimate McCullers's own female masculinity and complex affective life
- 1943 Jane Bowles, *Two Serious Ladies*, one of whom leaves her husband after falling in love with a female prostitute.
- 1944 Mary Renault, *The Friendly Young Ladies*, about an unstated but apparent lesbian partnership.
- 1949 Olivia (Dorothy Strachey), *Olivia*: an autobiographical novel that includes Olivia's obsessive crush on the headmistress of a French boarding school.
- 1950 Tereska Torres, *Women's Barracks*: a novel about Free French female soldiers in a London barracks that inadvertently kicks off the genre of lesbian pulp fiction.
- 1951 Poet Elizabeth Bishop travels to Brazil, where she falls in love with Lota de Macedo Soares. Bishop later forms a partnership with Alice Methfessel. Bishop's subtle and restrained published poetry has been read in relation to her lesbianism; recently published archival material conveys more of her private life.
- 1952 Claire Morgan (Patricia Highsmith), *The Price of Salt*: the well-known crime writer's only explicitly lesbian novel – with a notably happy ending – published under a pseudonym.
- 1953 Alfred Kinsey, *Sexual Behavior in the Human Female*, including information about women's same-sex experiences.
- 1956 Jeannette H. Foster, *Sex Variant Women in Literature*: a groundbreaking literary survey of women's same-sex attachments and gender-crossings.  
 First issue of *The Ladder: A Lesbian Review*, the magazine of the lesbian homophile group, The Daughters of Bilitis.
- 1957 Ann Bannon (Ann Thayer), *Odd Girl Out*: the first of what will become Bannon's Beebo Brinker series of lesbian pulp fiction novels.
- 1964 Violette Leduc, *La Bâtarde*: an autobiographical French best seller featuring schoolgirl affairs, the raciest of which was originally omitted and later issued separately as *Thérèse and Isabelle*.  
 Jane Rule, *Desert of the Heart*: Rule's debut novel, an optimistic lesbian coming-out narrative.

CHRONOLOGY

- 1965 May Sarton, *Mrs. Stevens Hears the Mermaids Singing*: the prolific writer's first novelization of an explicitly lesbian relationship.
- 1966 Maureen Duffy, *The Microcosm*: an experimental novel about the patrons of a lesbian bar.  
 Transgender and drag queen patrons of Compton's Cafeteria in San Francisco riot in protest against police harassment.
- 1968 Muriel Rukeyser, *The Speed of Light*: poetry reflecting Rukeyser's increasingly woman-identified personal politics.
- 1969 Monique Wittig, *Les Guérillères*, and later *Le Corps lesbien* (1973): experimental works of linguistic, literary and political feminist/lesbian revolution.  
 Patrons of the Stonewall Inn, a gay bar in New York's Greenwich Village, protest a police raid, leading to three days of riots; considered a turning point in the gay rights movement.  
 Betty Friedan, president of the National Organization for Women (NOW), purportedly declares lesbianism the "lavender menace" for feminism.  
 Gay Liberation Front (GLF) and Gay Activists Alliance established in New York City. GLF London is founded the following year.  
 Committee for Homosexual Equality formed in Britain.
- 1970 Radicalesbians, "Woman Identified Woman": an early manifesto on lesbian feminism.  
 First organized Pride March in New York City, commemorating the Stonewall Riots; London follows in 1972.
- 1971 Judy Grahn, *Edward the Dyke and Other Poems*: Grahn's first book of poetry, published by her Women's Press Collective.
- 1972 Joanna Russ, "When It Changed," followed by *The Female Man* (1975): best-known of the lesbian utopian science fiction genre.  
 Pat Parker, *Child of Myself*: a debut collection by a poet later deemed "the poet laureate of the Black and Lesbian peoples."  
 Isabel Miller (Alma Routsong), *Patience and Sarah* (first self-published as *A Place for Us*), wins the inaugural Stonewall Book Award, from the American Library Association.

CHRONOLOGY

- 1973 Rita Mae Brown, *Rubyfruit Jungle*: a best-selling, light-hearted lesbian coming-of-age novel.  
 Jill Johnston, *Lesbian Nation: The Feminist Solution*: an outspoken lesbian feminist tract.  
 Naiad Press, specializing in literature by and about lesbians, founded by Barbara Grier and Donna McBride.  
 The American Psychiatric Association removes homosexuality from its list of disorders in the *Diagnostic and Statistical Manual of Mental Disorders*.
- 1974 Ann Allen Shockley, *Loving Her*, attributed as the first openly and sympathetic Black lesbian novel.  
 Marilyn Hacker, *Presentation Piece*, National Book Award winner: the first collection by the “radical formalist” lesbian poet.
- 1976 Adrienne Rich, *Twenty-One Love Poems*, about two female lovers.  
 Bertha Harris, *Lover*: a postmodern lesbian narrative.  
 First issue of *Sinister Wisdom: A Multicultural Lesbian Literary and Art Journal*.
- 1977 M. F. Beal *Angel Dance*, considered the first lesbian feminist crime novel.  
 Combahee River Collective, *A Black Feminist Statement*, about the politics and challenges facing U.S. Black feminists and lesbians (published 1978 in *Capitalist Patriarchy and the Case for Socialist Feminism*).  
 Bertha Harris and Emily Sisley, *The Joy of Lesbian Sex*.
- 1979 The first National March on Washington for Lesbian and Gay Rights.
- 1980 Adrienne Rich, “Compulsory Heterosexuality and Lesbian Existence,” proposes influential concept of a “lesbian continuum.”
- c. 1980 Kitchen Table: Women of Color Press, founded by the collective energy of Barbara Smith, Audre Lorde, and Cherríe Moraga.
- 1981 Cherríe Moraga and Gloria Anzaldúa, eds., *This Bridge Called My Back: Writings by Radical Women of Color*: a key

Cambridge University Press

978-1-107-05400-4 - The Cambridge Companion to Lesbian Literature

Edited by Jodie Medd

Frontmatter

[More information](#)

## CHRONOLOGY

feminist intervention on intersections of gender, race, class, and sexuality.

- 1982 Audre Lorde, *Zami: A New Spelling of My Name*: a “bio-mythography” from the influential poet and essayist.  
 Alice Walker, *The Color Purple*: a Pulitzer Prize-winning novel featuring a long-term love affair between two female characters.  
 Nancy Garden, *Annie on My Mind*: a teen lesbian romance with a happy ending, considered a first in Young Adult fiction.  
 Evelyn Torton Beck, ed., *Nice Jewish Girls: A Lesbian Anthology*.  
 Wisconsin becomes the first state in the United States to outlaw discrimination based on sexual orientation.  
 Barnard College Conference, “The Scholar and the Feminist: Toward a Politics of Sexuality”: a touchstone event in the 1980s feminist sex wars.
- 1983 Alison Bechdel, *Dykes to Watch Out For* comic strip is launched, running until 2008.  
 Cherríe Moraga, *Loving in the War Years*: a multi-genre collection on being a Chicana lesbian.
- 1984 Katherine V. Forrest, *Amateur City*: the first of the Kate Delafeld Mysteries, featuring the first lesbian professional police detective.  
 Firebrand Books, feminist and lesbian publishing house, founded by Nancy Bereano.
- 1985 Jeanette Winterson, *Oranges Are Not The Only Fruit*: a coming-out story of a girl in an evangelical family, launches Winterson’s literary career.
- 1986 Cheryl Clarke, *Living as a Lesbian*: a poetry collection by an outspoken Black writer, scholar, and activist.
- 1987 Gloria Anzaldúa, *Borderlands/La Frontera: The New Mestiza*: an exploration of geographical, racial, gender, and sexual border-crossings.
- 1988 Sarah Schulman, *After Dolores*: a gritty detective novel set in New York City lesbian subculture.

CHRONOLOGY

Pat (later Patrick) Califia, *Macho Sluts: Erotic Fiction*: a controversial classic of lesbian sadomasochism.

Section 28 of the Local Government Bill in the United Kingdom, banning the “promotion” of homosexuality by local authorities. It is repealed in Scotland (2000) and England (2003) after ongoing protest.

1989 Lambda Literary Awards established. Dorothy Allison’s *Trash* wins for Lesbian Fiction.

Lesléa Newman, *Heather Has Two Mommies*: a children’s book banned in schools and libraries.

Denmark becomes the first country to legally recognize same-sex civil unions.

1990 Queer Nation, a multicultural direct-action group, founded in New York City.

Academic conference organized by Teresa de Lauretis institutionalizes the term “queer theory.”

1991 Jewelle Gomez, *The Gilda Stories*, following two centuries in the life of an African-American lesbian vampire.

1992 Dorothy Allison, *Bastard Out of Carolina*: a semi-autobiographical debut novel, brings Allison critical and popular recognition.

Lesbian Avengers, a direct action group, founded in New York City.

1993 Leslie Feinberg, *Stone Butch Blues*: the first novel by the pioneering “transgender warrior,” conveys struggles of butch/trans-identified Jess in 1950s–1970s America.

First Dyke March, organized by the Lesbian Avengers, on the eve of the Lesbian and Gay March on Washington.

U.S. “Don’t Ask, Don’t Tell” policy issued regarding lesbians and gays in the military.

1994 Emma Donoghue, *Stir-Fry*: a debut novel by Irish(-Canadian) writer whose novels often address female same-sex relations.

1996 Ann-Marie MacDonald, *Fall on Your Knees*: a celebrated debut novel by the Canadian playwright, features a 1920s New York interracial lesbian romance.

xxx