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Lesbian Pulp Fiction

The Sexually Intrepid World of Lesbian Paperback Novels 1950–1965

Edited by Katherine V. Forrest

Through the darkness, you can see figures gathered in twos and threes — the glowing tip of a cigarette, a close-manicured hand draped over a shoulder, heads turning to study the new arrival. Someone moves toward you, snapping open a lighter. Step into the twilight world of lesbian pulps!

In 1950, Fawcett founded their Gold Medal imprint, inaugurating the reign of lesbian pulp fiction. These were the books that small-town lesbians and prurient men bought by the millions—cheap, easy to find in drugstores, and immediately recognizable by their lurid covers: often a hard-looking brunette standing over a scantily-clad blonde or a man gazing in tormented lust at a lovely, unobtainable lesbian. For women leading straight lives, here was confirmation that they were not alone and that darkly glamorous, “gay” places like Greenwich Village existed. In the over-heated prose typical of the genre, these books document the emergence of a lesbian subculture in postwar America. Some—especially those written by lesbians—offer sympathetic and realistic depictions of “life in the shadows,” while others (no less fun to read now) are smutty, sensational tales of innocent girls led astray.

Thanks to reissues of classic pulps by publishers like Cleis Press, the lesbian pulp genre is now delighting a new generation of avid readers. Authors like Ann Bannon (*Odd Girl Out*, *Beebo Brinker*) and Vin Packer (*Spring Fire*) are celebrated as pioneers. Bannon routinely draws hundreds of enthusiastic fans to her book signings, and readers of the *Chicago Free Press* even named her their favorite author of last year, even though her books were originally published more than 40 years ago!

In Lesbian Pulp Fiction: The Sexually Intrepid World of Lesbian Paperback Novels 1950–1965, grande dame of lesbian literature Katherine V. Forrest offers a superb survey of the best of the pulps, presented with the original, sensational jacket copy (“They walked together

into a world of exotic evil." "Lorraine was different...but was she bad?") The volume includes excerpts by well-known authors Ann Bannon, Vin Packer, Joan Ellis, Valerie Taylor, and Marion Zimmer Bradley (writing as Miriam Gardner), as well as many long-forgotten treasures to delight gay and lesbian readers, pulp aficionados, and anyone interested in American popular culture.

About the editor:

Katherine V. Forrest is the author of 15 novels including *Hancock Park*, *Curious Wine*, and *Daughters of a Coral Dawn*. She is twice winner of the Lambda Literary Award for best mystery: for *The Beverly Malibu* and *Murder by Tradition*, both part of the Kate Delafield series. A winner of the Lambda Literary Foundation's Pioneer Award, she lives in San Francisco.

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