

“Was It Right to Love Her Brother’s Wife So Passionately?”: Lesbian Pulp Novels and U.S. Lesbian Identity, 1950–1965

Yvonne Keller

At last, lesbians! . . . I read every one of these mass-market paperbacks I could get my hands on. . . . I was driven, searching for my nourishment like a starveling, grabbing at any crumb that looked, tasted, or smelled digestible.

—Lee Lynch, “Cruising the Libraries”¹

No matter how embarrassed and ashamed I felt when I went to the cash register to buy these books [lesbian pulps], it was absolutely necessary for me to have them. I needed them the way I needed food and shelter for survival.

—Donna Allegra, “Between the Sheets”²

U.S.-centered scholars typically see the lesbian literary landscape in the fifty years between the publication of *The Well of Loneliness* in 1928 and the explosion of lesbian-feminist publishing in the early 1970s as a vast, uninhabitable desert best traversed only quickly, with one foot heavy on the gas. In fact, however, at least from 1950 to 1965, this period was flooded with lesbian fiction in the form of lesbian pulp novels, mass-market paperbacks with explicitly lesbian themes and sensationalized covers that enjoyed widespread distribution and millions in sales. Certain segments of contemporary academic and lesbian culture have appreciated these books and even republished them as historical, campy, or sexy fictions (and quite a few refrigerators bear magnets displaying pulp covers). Yet, the genre’s undeniably homophobic and voyeuristic appeal to a heterosexual male audience intent on enjoying the “queer loves” of the “twilight woman” ties this image of lesbianism to heterosexual pornography. Hence, most scholars have ignored these books precisely because of their “low-brow” and often homophobic characteristics. As the above epigraphs attest, however, these nonliterary, often homophobic books mattered intensely to some women of the time. They supplied a nourishment that Lynch and Allegra, among others, found necessary to their survival—lesbian representation.

For many lesbians in the 1950s and early 1960s, lesbian pulps engendered profoundly mixed feelings. For instance, Donna Allegra, a working-class black lesbian from New York City, writes, “I look back now and see where those books and their ideas rotted my guts and crippled my moral structure,” but also: “In nothing and nowhere else in the world I live[d] in could I have seen the possibility of a lesbian happily-ever-after, when I was a teen, outside of [these pulps].”³ While Allegra’s harsh indictment seems reason enough to never touch another pulp, the idea of pulps as the only location for a “lesbian happily-ever-after” leads me to speculate about the place of reading homophobic texts in lesbian identity formation. The 1950s were a time when most lesbians could not access any stories about themselves, much less positive ones, since lesbianism was mostly invisible in popular culture. When it was conceptualized at all in the 1950s, homosexuality was a crime, sin, or illness; many homosexuals thought of themselves as “flawed individuals” or people with “a homosexual problem.” In this difficult context, lesbian pulps were crucial “survival literature,” in Joan Nestle’s evocative phrase, coveted and treasured for their sometimes positive and sometimes awful but decidedly lesbian and decidedly available representation.⁴

While Allegra’s comments demonstrate these contradictory feelings on an autobiographical level, the 1994 landmark lesbian literary anthology, *Chloe Plus Olivia: An Anthology of Lesbian Literature from the Seventeenth Century to the Present*, is a prime example of the ambivalence lesbian pulps elicit on a scholarly level—dismissed, yet foundational. It is the first of its kind, an 812-page lesbian literary canon.⁵ Lillian Faderman names pulps as the first lesbian fiction she read in the very first sentences of the introduction:

In 1956, as a teenager, I began to consider myself a lesbian. Almost as soon as I claimed that identity, being already enamored of books, of course I looked around for literary representations that would help explain me to myself. I did not have far to look, because the pulp book racks at the local drugstore exhibited a dizzying array of titles like *Odd Girl*, *Twisted Sisters*, *Twilight Lovers*, *We Walk in Shadows*, and *Whisper Their Love*.⁶

Thus from the outset, Faderman provides evidence for one of my central arguments: lesbian pulp novels were readily available to women of this generation, in “dizzying” quantities and at locations close to home. Instead of acknowledging these books’ impact, however, Faderman denies the pulps’ importance on aesthetic grounds, citing their “heavy-handed prose, stock characters, and predictability,” preferring instead “‘real literature,’ the kind I read in my English classes.”⁷ As she herself admits however, this understandable desire for “real” lesbian literature remained completely unsatisfied all through

the long training for her Ph.D. in English. And though Faderman names the pulps as her personal starting point, no lesbian pulp authors are among the seventy-seven writers in her anthology. Faderman's canon is wide-reaching, including women who did not identify as lesbians, nonfiction sexological and psychoanalytic treatises, over 10 percent male authors, and fiction that Faderman herself declares homophobic.⁸ Lesbian canon creation surely has much to gain by being so generously inclusive, so the absence of pulps in a text such as this only serves to underscore how problematic some have found the pulps—indeed, the very literature that shaped Faderman's generation is missing. The mid-twentieth century was a particularly homophobic time, and the pulps were undoubtedly poisonous as well as nourishing. But their excision from history and literature, a disavowal of the power of a homophobic yet necessary food, is surely problematic for lesbian/gay/queer scholars.

Fortunately, augmented by republication of some pulps in the 1970s (Arno Press, a division of the *New York Times*), in the 1980s (Naiad Press and Timely Books), and in the 1990s (Quality Paperback Book Club), a scholarly reassessment of this silence about lesbian pulp began in the late 1980s and early 1990s.⁹ It was complemented by the more popular work of collectors, writers, and journalists, ranging from 1975 to 2001.¹⁰ At the level of nonbook media, alongside the refrigerator magnets, a "Lesbian Pulp Address Book," a film, a play, and various Web sites have sprung from these books.¹¹ More recently the pulps have experienced another wave of republication. In 1995 New York University Press released *Diana: A Strange Autobiography*, while the Feminist Press released Valerie Taylor's *The Girls in 3-B* in 2003 and is scheduled to release Tereska Torres's *Women's Barracks* in 2005. Between 2001 and 2004 Cleis Press republished five of Ann Bannon's lesbian pulps as well as Vin Packer's *Spring Fire*. There is also more recent work on lesbian pulp, and research on gay male pulp.¹² These scholars have illuminated various aspects of the pulps, but none have attempted to lay out the overview or the depth of genre definition and pulp history I offer here.

This article gives a brief history of lesbian pulps, defines the genre, and argues for pulps' importance as a readily available, popular discourse that put the word *lesbian* in mass circulation as never before. Despite the ambivalence lesbian pulps have often evoked, they are important to lesbian studies because their truly impressive quantities helped create the largest generation of self-defined lesbians up to that point, a group of women who would go on to make history as they, alongside others of nondominant sexuality, midwived the largest gay/lesbian/queer movement in the United States to date.

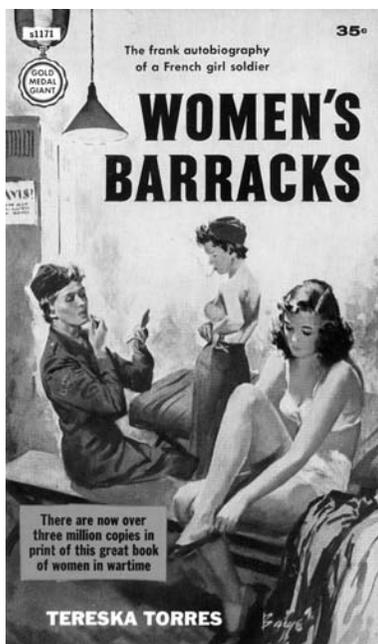


Figure 1.
Women's Barracks, by Tereska Torres: the first lesbian pulp (1950, Fawcett Books).

The Rise and Fall of Lesbian Pulps, 1950–1965

Lesbian pulps flourished between 1950 and 1965, resulting in more than five hundred books containing lesbian representation. As far as I can document, Barbara Grier was the first to call this time period the “golden age” of lesbian pulps.¹³ The covers are their best known feature, sensationalist and overtly lesbian, or at least “deviant” or overly sexualized. These books were both shunned and coveted by lesbians of the time. Gay male titles existed, but very few comparatively; the homoerotic and plentiful muscle magazines are often seen as the gay male equivalent. Though even rarer, transgender/transsexual pulp also existed.¹⁴ While a trickle of lesbian-themed books, including some paperbacks, were published in the 1930s and 1940s, the lesbian pulp genre truly begins with the publication of Tereska Torres’s best-selling first novel, *Women's Barracks*, in 1950.¹⁵

Women's Barracks sold so well that it likely outsold all subsequent lesbian pulps. It was autobiographically based; Torres was eighteen when the war started, joined the Free French Army in 1939, and spent most of World War II in London in the resistance movement. She continued to write, and married U.S. war journalist Meyer Levin, the author most famously of *Compulsion*, a novelization of the trial of Leopold and Loeb. *Women's Barracks* was published as a paperback original, meaning its first publication was not in cloth but in paperback.¹⁶ Its original cover depicts a women’s locker room, in which a fully dressed woman sits smoking, looking seriously at a woman dressed only in bra and panties, who is bent over, about to put on her skirt, and returning the first woman’s gaze with a knowing look and smile. Told from the point of view of a young heterosexual Frenchwoman, the novel recounts the mostly homosexual love affairs of a group of young French women in a barracks of the French Free Forces in England during World War II. The narrator divides lesbianism firmly in two types, either “real” lesbians (masculine, fated to be

forever gay, and permanently outside normal society) and feminine women (beautiful, sophisticated types who temporarily take innocent girls as lovers in a mother/child-type relationship). While the “real” lesbians are strong, healthy, friendly, and long to live on farms, the feminine ones are urban and decadent. This book is anomalous within the genre in its relative attention to character development, its heterosexual female point of view, its in-depth discussion of “masculine” lesbians, and because it tells the stories of numerous characters instead of just a few. On the other hand, its emphasis on romance and sex to the exclusion of other aspects of the women’s lives is typical. While it does not solicit a male voyeuristic gaze as overtly as many later books, its objectification of women, as Kate Adams writes, is established from the first scene.¹⁷ According to *Publishers Weekly’s* statistics, as of 1975 this book had sold 2.5 million copies and was the 244th best-selling novel (pre-1975) in the U.S.¹⁸ The enormous success of this book, one of Fawcett’s first entries into the paperback original book business, was a major influence on the press. Fawcett went on to publish more of the least homophobic pulps than any other publisher, including the next big star, *Spring Fire*.

Published two years later in 1952, Vin Packer’s *Spring Fire* was also extremely successful; with these two quick best-sellers, multiple publishers began to pay attention to this potential moneymaking theme and started publishing in the genre. Packer, who also published lesbian pulp under the pseudonym Ann Aldrich, is actually the lesbian writer Marijane Meaker, these days a well-known children’s book author writing as M. E. Kerr. Meaker worked for Fawcett and was asked to write *Spring Fire*, undoubtedly because Fawcett knew better than anyone how well *Women’s Barracks* was selling. According to the cover of Cleis Press’s edition in 2004, *Spring Fire* sold more than 1.5 million copies. It is difficult to determine real sales figures for pulps; *Publishers Weekly’s* numbers are authoritative to a certain degree (one can assume that at least as many sold as it states), but have serious limitations since they count only bookstore sales, leaving other paperback distribution possibilities, such as newsstands and grocery stores, unaccounted for—a crucial loss when accounting for pulp sales, as I will show.

Like *Women’s Barracks*, *Spring Fire* partakes of a convention of lesbian literature in which stories are located in female-only spaces, in this case a college sorority. The cover drawing depicts two women, both dressed in a satiny dress or negligee, sitting on the edge of the same bed. They look away from each other, and while the blond, short-haired one merely gazes, the dark-haired one looks downward and distressed. The visual allusion to lesbianism is augmented by a cover text that trumpets, “Suddenly—they belonged to each other,”

and claims its story as similar to that of the most famous of lesbian texts, *The Well of Loneliness*. In the story, the two girls, Leda and Mitch, begin to ignore their boyfriends and become involved both emotionally and sexually. However, Leda is tormented by her attraction, and when they are discovered, Leda blames Mitch, who is thrown out of the sorority. Leda becomes mentally deranged and must leave school. In the last scene, in a 180-degree emotional turn, Mitch decides: “She didn’t hate [Leda]. She didn’t hate her at all, and she knew then that she had never really loved her.” This last-minute concession to heterosexist morality (imposed by the editor, per Packer) is representative of the genre’s ideological and publishing constraints.¹⁹

In 1989, *Spring Fire*’s author offered an insider’s perspective on the genre’s beginnings, one that suggests the newness of the idea of a gay readership:

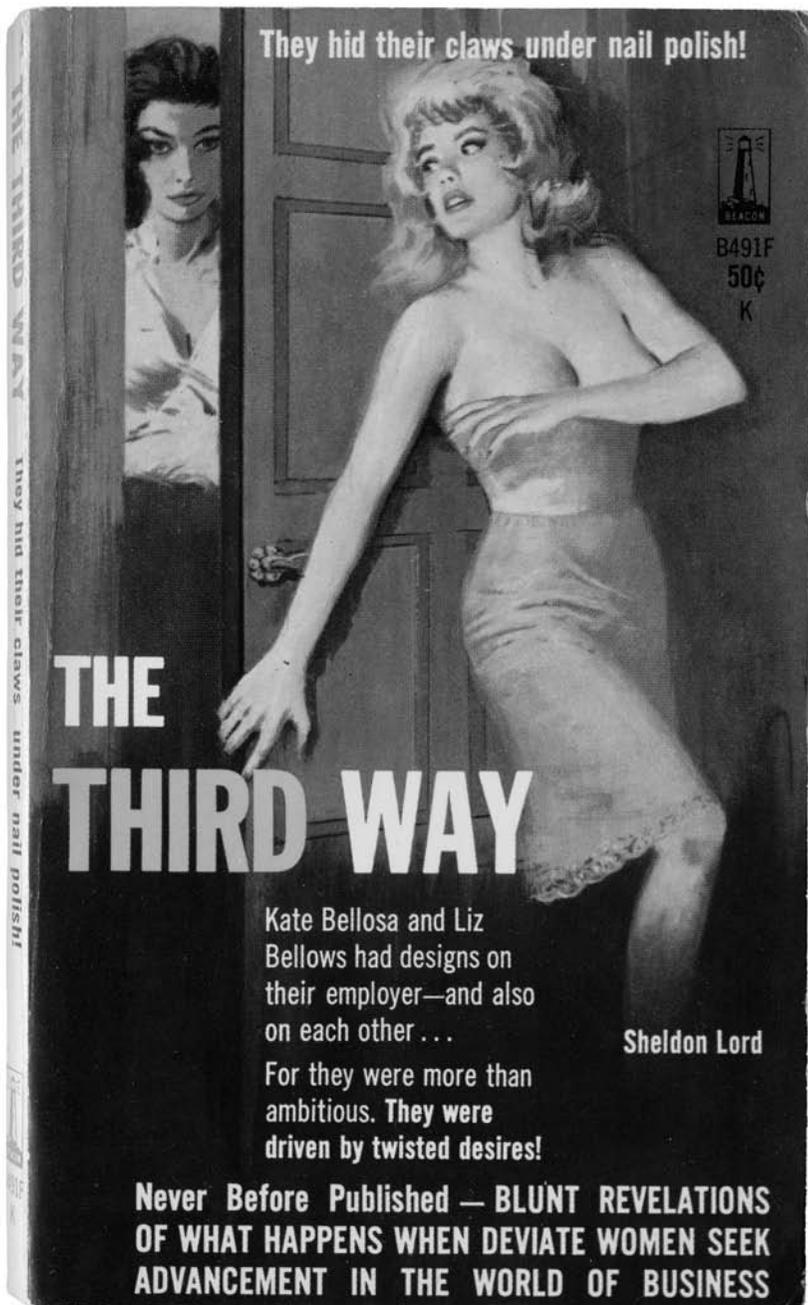
[*Spring Fire*] was not aimed at any lesbian market, because there wasn’t any that we knew about. I was just out of college. I was gay . . . it wasn’t a prurient book. . . . Tereska Torres . . . wasn’t aiming [*Women’s Barracks*] at any market either—just telling her experiences the best she could, as I was. We were amazed, *floored*, by the mail that poured in. That was the first time anyone was aware of the gay audience out there.²⁰

This comment shows the pulps as creating a lesbian/gay audience, and, contrary to what was to come after these first two books, shows that neither the publisher nor the writers assumed that their work was or should be written for a voyeuristic heterosexual male audience. Thus the pulp phenomenon may well have been an accident that, supported by the increasing post–World War II sexualization of popular culture, led to a successful genre.

I divide the lesbian pulp genre into five subsets, of which the major two are “pro-lesbian” and “virile adventures.” Both *Women’s Barracks* and *Spring Fire* are lesbian pulps of the more “positive” variety that I call pro-lesbian. These are women-centered, often told from a woman’s point of view, dominated by a love story, without obviously extraneous sex scenes, and with well-developed characters compared to what would soon become the plentiful norm: the male-reader-oriented pulp, which I call virile adventures, typically with more sex and a male protagonist. Pro-lesbian pulp is my term for what Suzanna Danuta Walters calls “a sort of industry within an industry: lesbian pulps written by women within a thriving lesbian pulp industry dominated largely by male authors, and written for a voyeuristic male audience.”²¹ The least sensationalist of them can be called pulp romances, and they are similar to contemporary lesbian romances. These pro-lesbian pulps were books with a female protagonist, and they were uniformly written by women, or at least by authors who

Figure 2.

The Third Way, by Sheldon Lord, a virile adventure (Beacon Books, 1962).



They hid their claws under nail polish!



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THE THIRD WAY
they hid their claws under nail polish!

THE THIRD WAY

Kate Bellosa and Liz Bellows had designs on their employer—and also on each other . . .

Sheldon Lord

For they were more than ambitious. They were driven by twisted desires!

Never Before Published — BLUNT REVELATIONS
OF WHAT HAPPENS WHEN DEVIATE WOMEN SEEK
ADVANCEMENT IN THE WORLD OF BUSINESS

used female pseudonyms. By my criteria there are sixteen pro-lesbian pulp authors, with more than ninety books between them.

In what must have been in part a misreading or ignorance of the dual audience (gay and straight) that propelled these initial two books' high sales, publishers between 1952 and 1957 published almost only virile adventures. After 1957, publishers concerned with the bottom line insisted on lesbianism, but the "morality" or sensationalism of that portrayal became secondary. This shift allowed space for the first pro-lesbian books since *Spring Fire*, with 1957 marking the beginning of the pro-lesbian wave, with first books by Valerie Taylor and Ann Bannon, both of whom would go on to write numerous others.

Asserting their agency in this later expansion of the genre, several pro-lesbian authors claim that when they saw how homophobic the pulps were, it fueled their desire to write their own versions. Valerie Taylor, a lesbian author (born Velma Nacella Young) who continued to work as an author, became an activist for social justice, and died in 1997, comments:

I began writing gay novels around 1957. There was suddenly a plethora of them on sale in drugstores and bookstores . . . many written by men who had never knowingly spoken to a lesbian. Wish fulfillment stuff, pure erotic daydreaming. I wanted to make some money, of course, but I also thought that we should have some stories about real people.²²

Lesbian writer Paula Christian says in a similar vein: "Contemporary fiction showed such instability, violence, and sensationalism. . . . I simply wanted to show the other side."²³ Pro-lesbian authors, then, began to write lesbian pulps after the genre was already well under way, and many actively wrote against the genre's norms, including letting a lesbian couple end up happily together. It is these books that lesbians of the time most treasured and are the most republished today. This subset also had genre constraints—other authors speak of the limits imposed on their work, such as the requirement for unhappy endings to not go "against the moral code."²⁴

After 1965, mainstream publishers ceased publishing lesbian pulps of any variety. Two divergent forces are at work in the genre's demise. One is the increasing amount of explicit pornography with lesbian themes put out by new, small presses unaffiliated with established East Coast publishing. A series of Supreme Court decisions had established that borderline pornographic material could usually not be censored, and these start-ups had certainly noted the high sales of pulps with lesbian themes for Fawcett, Midwood, and other mainstream houses.²⁵ These books were explicitly coded on the cover as "men's books" or for "adults only," advertising their sexually explicit material; they

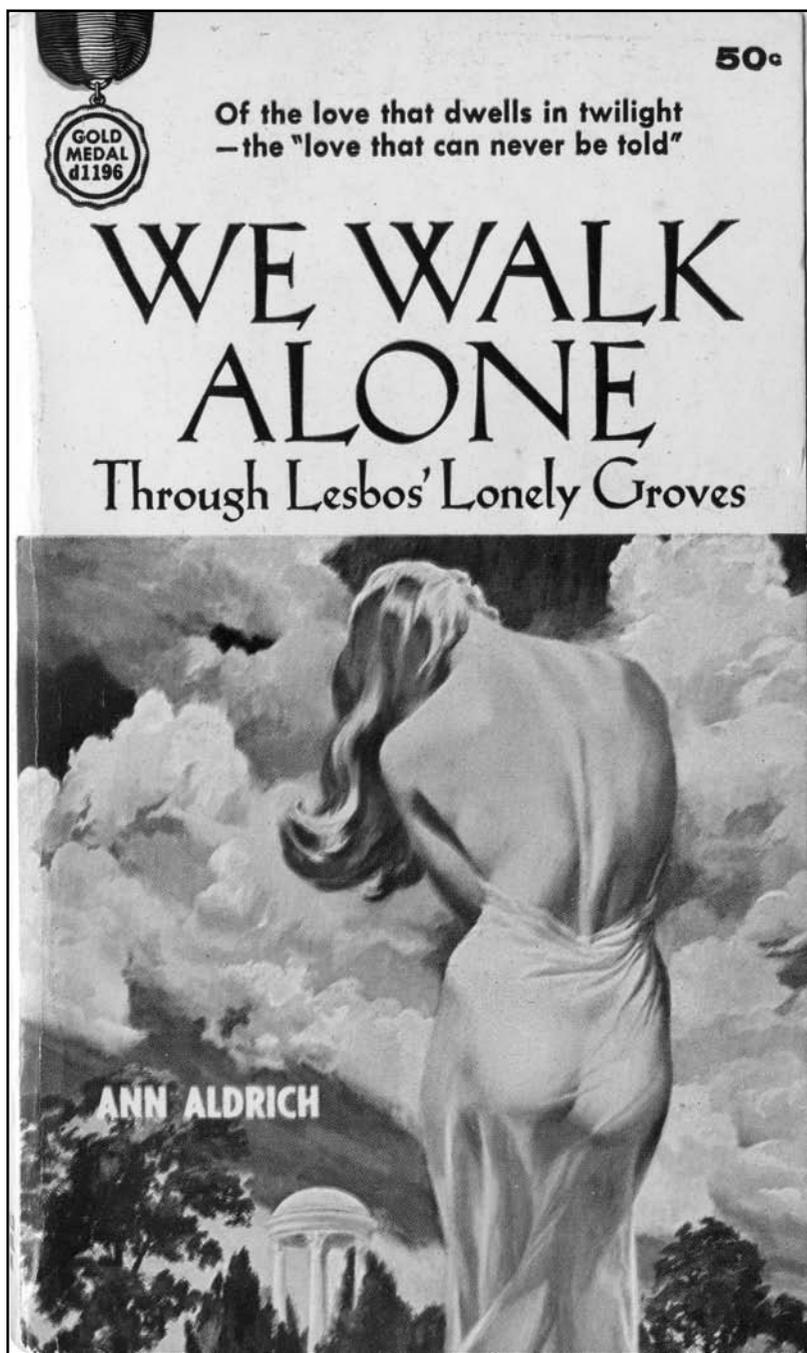
are what most readers today would categorize as pornography. Due to their sexual explicitness and lack of mass distribution by mainstream presses, these books cannot be categorized as lesbian pulps. At the same time, mainstream presses retreated from lesbian themes. March Hastings writes that “the mood of my publisher was changing, becoming ambivalent.”²⁶ Similarly, Paula Christian states that after 1965 “there simply wasn’t any editorial interest in lesbianism.”²⁷ The times had changed decisively. With the beginning of the 1960s and the sexual revolution, it is possible that mainstream publishers were less willing to present such male-oriented packages, or perhaps they simply sold less well. At the same time, publishers were still unwilling overall to publish serious lesbian fiction.

Mainstream presses that published lesbian-themed books were scarce between 1965 and 1970. Lesbian pulp had disappeared, and literary output was minimal: Jane Rule’s *Desert of the Heart* in 1964, May Sarton’s *Mrs. Stevens Hears the Mermaids Singing* in 1965, and Maureen Duffy’s *The Microcosm* in 1966. It was not until the 1969 publication of Isabel Miller’s *A Place for Us*, which Bonnie Zimmerman names as the beginning of a new wave of lesbian feminist fiction—a newly fierce and defiant wave—that lesbian fiction again became plentiful.²⁸ Surprisingly, though—and crucially for the ultimate argument, which is focused on quantity—the 1970s never achieved the sheer abundance lesbian fiction had achieved in the 1950s and early 1960s.

A Definition of the Genre: Judging a Book by Its Cover

While the basic definition of lesbian pulps as a group of 1950s and early 1960s paperbacks with lesbian themes is undisputed, the boundaries of the genre are quite diffuse and not so much contested as rarely even articulated. I argue here that it is less content than cover that defines lesbian pulps as a genre. The number of scholars who have written on the issues of definition and genre in lesbian pulp is small; it is an invisible genre both in and outside of lesbian literary criticism. Given the location of lesbian pulps at the noncanonical, homophobic intersection of literature, lgbtq studies, feminist studies, and popular culture, it is unsurprising that lesbian pulps are ignored.²⁹

Yet as early as the 1950s and 1960s, women wrote critically about the lesbian pulp phenomenon. Lesbian bibliophiles, reviewers, and collectors such as Jeannette Foster and Barbara Grier are especially useful for their discussion of lesbian pulps in their extensive bibliographies of lesbian representation in literature. Foster’s *Sex Variant Women in Literature*, published in 1956, is too early to name the phenomenon, but it discusses the antecedents of lesbian



pulps in the infrequent “cheaply sensational” type of book with lesbian themes of the 1930s and 1940s, of which the first, according to Foster, is Sheila Donisthorpe’s *Loveliest of Friends* (1931), a homophobic book that “gives every evidence of being written hastily to profit” in the aftermath of *The Well of Loneliness*.³⁰ As the first to label and organize lesbian pulp, Barbara Grier’s work is original and important. From 1957 on, under the pseudonym Gene Damon, Grier authored the “Lesbiana” book review column in the *Ladder*, the only lesbian periodical in existence in the United States during the 1950s, which reviewed pulps extensively. Grier was the first to name the boundaries of this group of books as firm and self-evident. In a 1966 piece titled “The Lesbian Paperback,” she looks back on the “era,” which in her view began in 1950 and ended in 1965, an assessment my own work corroborates. The worst books, what she calls “trash,” are those that, “regardless of the quantity of Lesbian action or characters involved in the book,”³¹ remain poor in quality and “are directed to a voyeur-minded, heterosexual male audience.”³² Grier

Figure 3.

We Walk Alone: Through Lesbos’ Lonely Groves, by Ann Aldrich; a journalistic pulp (Fawcett Gold Medal, 1955 [this ed. 1962]).

also selects out the better books in the genre: “however, a small nucleus of ‘good’ titles appeared.”³³ While Grier’s “trash” books are what I call virile adventures, her “good titles” roughly coincide with what I call pro-lesbian pulps. Like Foster, Grier considers books by men as well as those by women, an attitude likely

developed because of the scarcity of lesbian fiction and the frequent use of pseudonyms.

Various contemporary pro-lesbian/gay/queer scholars and the non-academically affiliated writers I mentioned before have defined lesbian pulps, but only in passing, virtually always in a fashion similar to Grier’s that includes references to “better” and “worse” categories of books.³⁴ The new generation of academically affiliated critics either ignores possible subcategories of lesbian pulp or asserts just the two basic categories—versions of the “better” and the “worse,” without elaboration. I want finally to offer a more in-depth definition of the boundaries of the genre.

Lesbian pulps are a genre, that is, a niche of stories that all have a similar structure or form, with similar characters, and that create the expectations of similar structures in the reader. While considering this definition of genre the norm, Michael Denning offers an alternate definition of the genre, not based on content, that I find suggestive. Denning argues for a “commercial definition,” which seeks to explain “the genre as it is defined in the marketplace as a particular sort of product.”³⁵ Denning reframes the notion of genre through a question of readership or consumerism—in my terms, how the book looks

when first held in the hand before buying: looking, therefore, not at the writer's words but at the publisher's signifiers. The emphasis is on covers, since he defines spy thrillers as those books that cite each other's authors on the jackets in promotional blurbs.³⁶ This approach not only takes the cultural milieu and readership into account, but names the covers as key to the genre's definition. My use of the cover as designator of the genre relies not on superlatives from famous authors, but on whether the cover manages to telegraph its lesbian content. This definition emphasizes the publishers' decisions, but also focuses attention on lesbian, bisexual, and questioning readers who persistently sought, found, and bought lesbian representation during the 1950s and early 1960s.

I define lesbian pulps through four criteria. First, they are published between 1950 and 1965; second, they have some lesbian content; third, they must be mass-market paperbacks; and fourth, they are classifiable as potentially lesbian by their cover art or copy. To take the first criterion first, *Women's Barracks* was released in 1950; after the mid-1960s lesbian themes become silenced, incorporated into pornography, or, rarely, a part of literary fiction. Second, a lesbian pulp must have either a character who is explicitly lesbian or thought of as lesbian, or, in nonfiction, lesbianism as a subject. The lesbianism, therefore, is not coded, as with Gertrude Stein, H. D., Willa Cather, and others. The third criterion, that a book must be a mass-market paperback, is an obvious requirement for a genre named for the cheap pulp paper used to make them. These books are for the most part paperback originals, though the genre includes hardcovers reprinted in paperback, with an appropriate cover, as explained below.

The final criterion is that the book is a lesbian pulp if it looks like it might contain lesbian themes when held in the hand by a prospective buyer in a store or in front of a newsstand rack. The least self-evident, this last is perhaps the most important; certainly it was to lesbians at the time. An alert buyer could usually discern, by looking at the cover, the lesbian themes that awaited within. As Lee Lynch writes, "their ludicrous and blatantly sensational cover copy were both my signals and my shame."³⁷ Judging a book by its cover not only acknowledges the most dramatic feature of these mixed media packages—the sensationalist cover art—but also allows the inclusion in the genre of many books that were originally published either prior to 1950 (such as Gale Wilhelm's *We Too Are Drifting* or Radclyffe Hall's *The Well of Loneliness*) or in cloth (such as Jess Stearn's *The Grapevine*), and then re-published between 1950 and 1965 in cheap paperback editions that looked the same as other lesbian pulps at the point of sale. Though Barbara Grier and John D'Emilio argue that only paperback originals deserve the name lesbian pulps, I disagree,

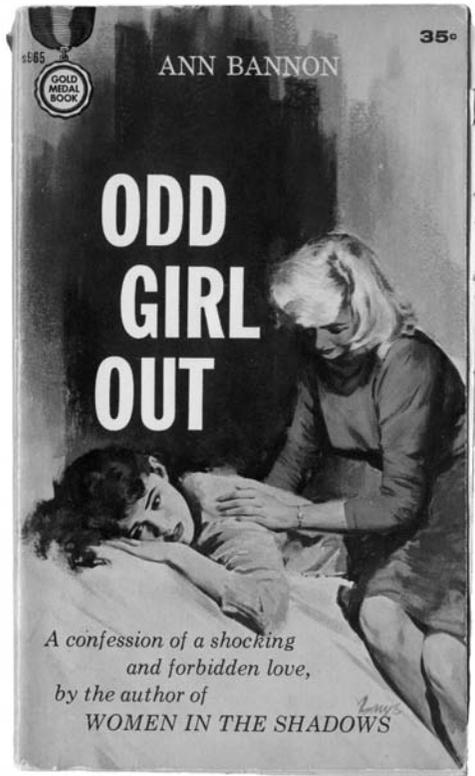


Figure 4. *Odd Girl Out*, by Ann Bannon, one of the first pro-lesbian pulps (Fawcett, 1957).

because these books all disseminated information about lesbianism in the same manner. In other words, in popular culture their initial impact was the same, despite differences in content or original publication date.³⁸ This is crucial from a cultural studies perspective, because arguably the most important feature of this genre is the books' status as publicly available lesbian texts. Though the literary quality of a pulp originally published in hardcover is usually better than that of a paperback original, the outward "look" of the book in paperback form is similar whether the book has been previously published or not.

Lesbian pulp book covers range over a wide spectrum, but all name or imply lesbianism and often advertise deviance, abnormality, or irresistible sex with a vivid drawing that might show a woman partially undressed, or two women, one of whom is partially undressed. Covers of typical 1950s' paperbacks, such as *Diana: The Story of a Strange Love* by Diana Fredericks, *Odd*

Girl Out by Ann Bannon, or *Of Shame and Joy* by Sheldon Lord, show two white women, one blond and one dark haired, in various stages of undress, touching each other. The books with the most innocuous, least sexualized covers in both image and text (such as a solitary, dressed woman looking seriously off in the distance) are the most likely to be pro-lesbian pulps; their lesbian theme may be inferred more subtly, for instance by a reference to *The Well of Loneliness* in the cover copy. The books with the most sexually explicit covers (such as a man looking at two almost naked women, or a man grabbing at a woman whose breasts are almost visible) are the most pornographic of the virile adventure pulps; they are still fairly innocuous by today's standards, however, with sex only vaguely described.

Often as crucial as the image in telegraphing a lesbian-specific message, the cover's title or text was sometimes quite overt—"Was it right to love her brother's wife so passionately?"³⁹—or used easily decipherable code words to imply lesbianism and/or deviance. For example, the covers of *Warped Women*, *Twilight Girl*, and *Women Without Men*, respectively proclaim: "Strange Love Stripped Them of All Decency," "The Savage Story of a Pretty Teen-Ager Enticed into Forbidden Practices by Older Girls!" and "Where women became as beasts."⁴⁰ Since the pulps were typically not bought by libraries, the covers were crucial markers of lesbianism—the closest thing to a Dewey decimal system for dykes—for generations of lesbian and incipient lesbian readers.

To put these covers in context, however, it is important to note that it was the style of all pulps, including reprints of works by canonical writers, to have covers that were over the top in sexual excess. Lee Server writes, "The books were packaged to move, flashing their wares like an open-raincoated exhibitionist—voluptuous cover art, sweat-soaked blurbs, and titles that had no time for the niceties of evocation or double entendre."⁴¹ The covers are the products of the publishers, who evidently thought exhibitionism would sell books; authors uniformly had no control over cover art, titles, or front and back cover copy. One of the cover artists of the period later corroborated: "It didn't matter to [the publishers] if it wasn't in the story. . . . The editors would say, 'Don't worry, we'll write it in! Just make sure to make 'em round!'"⁴² The cultural acceptance of pulp displaying more sex and exhibitionism than were featured on mainstream novel covers before—or since—is not just about capitalism, publisher's bottom lines, and the postwar sexualization of the marketplace, but about the publishing industry's ability to avoid the censorship that kept Hollywood, the "respectable press," television, and radio more sanitized.⁴³

Figure 5.

Pro-lesbian pulp *Twilight Girl*, by Della Martin (Beacon Books 1961). "Lorraine was 'different'—but was she bad?"

Lorraine was "different"—but was she bad?

TWILIGHT GIRL

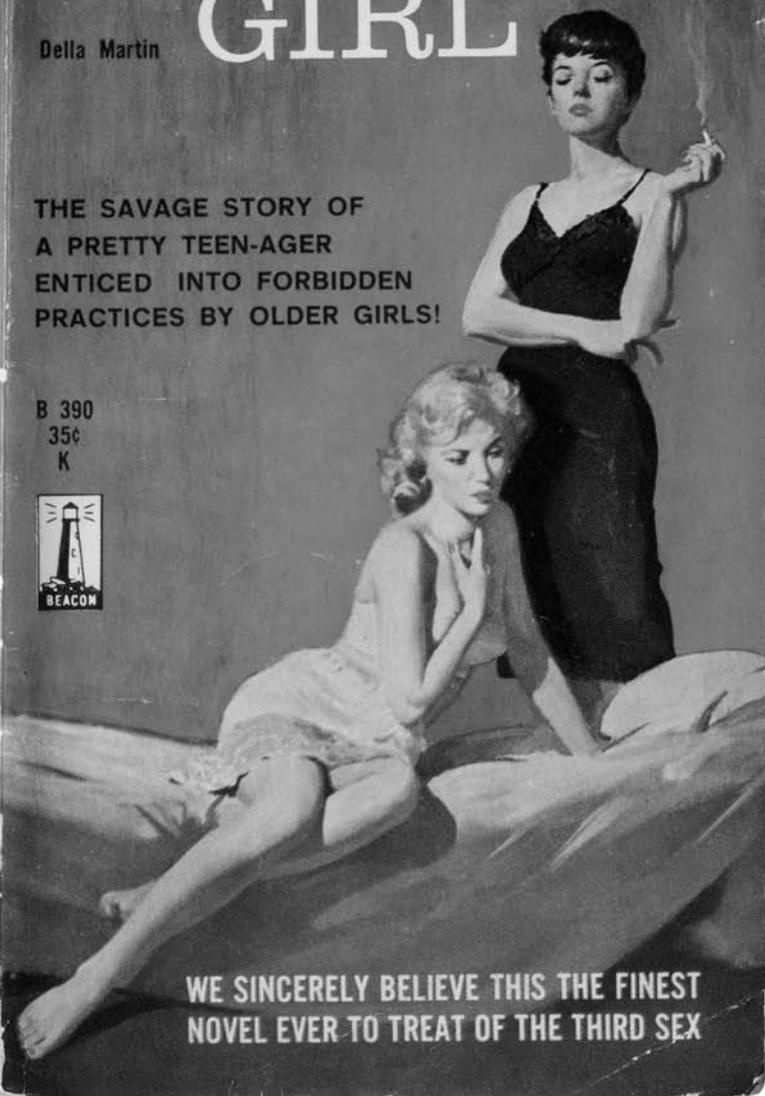
Della Martin

THE SAVAGE STORY OF
A PRETTY TEEN-AGER
ENTICED INTO FORBIDDEN
PRACTICES BY OLDER GIRLS!

B 390
35¢
K



Lorraine was "different"—but was she bad?



WE SINCERELY BELIEVE THIS THE FINEST
NOVEL EVER TO TREAT OF THE THIRD SEX

To make covers integral to the definition of lesbian pulp allows a broader range of books to be included than would be allowed by the criteria of other critics, who variously limit the genre to only fiction, only “lesbian romance,” only paperback originals, or only books originally published between 1950 and 1965. As noted above, I divide the lesbian pulp genre into five subgenres. In addition to the already discussed largest-selling virile adventure and pro-lesbian pulps, “revamped pulps,” “pseudo-scientific pulps,” and “journalistic pulps” are lesbian pulps whose covers did the same work of hinting at or announcing the lesbianism within. Revamped pulps came about because lesbian pulps were selling so well. Publishers culled their archives and found out-of-print lesbian fiction or lesbian-themed novels from abroad (therefore safer, presumably, due to distance), and revived or translated them to sell as lesbian pulp. Pseudo-scientific pulps pretend to scientific objectivity and nonfiction status, with many purportedly written by an author with a Ph.D. or an M.A., yet are about sensationalism and titillation. Journalistic pulps, investigative forays into the “secret world” of the lesbian, tend to be more nonfictional—if that is possible—than the pseudo-scientific pulps and focus more on lifestyle than sex.

As the two largest subsets of lesbian pulp, virile adventures and pro-lesbian pulps signal the two opposite extremes within the genre. While both offer lesbian characters, illicit and frequent sexual activity, prosaic writing, and a tendency toward sensationalism, virile adventure stories are generally intended for a straight male, white, working-to-middle-class, voyeuristic audience; often have a male hero; and are typically written by a male author or, rather, an author with a male pseudonym. Titillation, prurience, and “male adventure” abound; the book frequently ends with the development, consummation, or marriage of a heterosexual couple; and women are depicted as objectified. At the other end of the spectrum, pro-lesbian pulps can contain surprisingly nonhomophobic images of lesbians given the time period, and emphasize the story of a lesbian romance in some depth, sometimes with endings in which the lesbian couple remain happily together—an image that may appear boringly mainstream to some today, but was surely radical at the time. Not only do these books offer more character development, less violence, and less gratuitous sex, but also their authors often are female or at least use female pseudonyms. Certainly these two categories are not equally weighted opposites: the virile adventure stories constitute the bulk of lesbian pulps and are thus the standard, while the pro-lesbian pulps rather subvert this norm.

Despite its stereotyped quality and orientation toward straight men, the virile adventure story is important to a pro-lesbian analysis for two reasons.

First, most—about 85 percent—of the lesbian pulps published were virile adventures, making them the dominant form of lesbian representation in the culture, and the pulps that defined the genre from the point of view of publishing practices and popular perception. Second, the virile adventure is the background against which the pro-lesbian pulps are most clearly viewed, both acting as a “cover” for the more subversive representation and showing how comparatively antihomophobic the pro-lesbian pulps were. From this perspective we can see the pro-lesbian pulps as insurgent *rewritings* of virile adventures, only allowed because the genre as a whole sold so successfully and because they conformed to some degree to the genre. These distinctions, however, are not always clear. The author’s name/pseudonym, while indicative, is no guarantee of the pleasures of the text. Similarly, cover art, while indicative, is no guarantee of plot. The lesbian representation in a virile adventure can be more “positive,” subversive, sexy, or appealing—depending on the perspective of the reader and his/her time period—than that in a pro-lesbian pulp, the most austere of which depict no sex at all and can be narrowly “wholesome,” middle class, or normative in their values.

In the history of a genre, Michael Denning writes, “the moments when a new configuration of formulas and conventions comes to dominate the genre” can be significant symptoms of larger cultural changes.⁴⁴ The metamorphosis that allowed pro-lesbian pulps to spring from virile adventures at the end of the 1950s is, I suggest, an early sign of the first entrance into popular culture, in quantity, of the self-representation of an LGBTQ community. It is at a time when lesbians and gay men were represented—when represented at all—in the public sphere as deviants, spies, and sensationalist targets—that is, represented by others—that pro-lesbian pulps mark a self-directed, antihomophobic, active engagement with the public sphere, with the widespread sales and distribution crucial for people who often realized their identity in isolation. It is these quite surprisingly widespread sales and their possible effect on lesbian identity formation that I would like to address in this final section.

A Paperback Revolution for Lesbians: Quantity and the Potential for Identity Formation

Where would a woman of the 1950s and early 1960s, with perhaps a first lesbian love or same-sex leanings, search for information about homosexuality? If she went to the library she may have found *The Well of Loneliness* and medical writings by sexologists and psychologists. But even this was difficult: “Librarians contributed to the conspiracy of silence about lesbians.”⁴⁵ Judy Grahn writes:

In 1961, when I was twenty-one, I went to a library in Washington, D.C., to read about homosexuals and Lesbians. . . . The books on such a subject, I was told by indignant, terrified librarians unable to say aloud the word *homosexual*, were locked away. . . . Only professors, doctors, psychiatrists, and lawyers for the criminally insane could see them, check them out, hold them in their hands.⁴⁶

Another source of information for the incipient lesbian were the scandal magazines, which sometimes included articles with titles like “Hidden Homos and How to Spot Them” expressing a popularized, sensationalized terror at the specter of homosexuality.⁴⁷ She may have gleaned information through hearing about Kinsey, Freud (both published in mass-market paperback during this time), or rumors of homosexual purges at the state and federal government level.⁴⁸ Or she might never have heard about it at all.

In fact, however, she was most likely to find lesbian representation during the 1950s and early 1960s in the form of lesbian pulps. Books are a solitary purchase, consumable in the privacy of one’s own bedroom or apartment—a significant advantage in a homophobic world. They have a concreteness as well as a length that promises more knowledge and identificatory possibilities than the rumors or brief hints in scandal magazines. And lesbian pulps were not only cheap; they were readily available in the corner drugstore or newsstand. If she kept searching, she would find that in quite a few of these books the lesbians, while usually only portrayed as white and middle class, did fall in love, have sex, and sometimes avoided tragic fates. To show how a lesbian pulp might arrive in this woman’s hands, I offer a brief history of mass-market publishing, which went through dramatic changes in the 1940s that greatly increased the accessibility and availability of all mass-market paperback books.

Book distribution was comparatively elitist and limited before 1939. While cheap “penny dreadfuls,” “dime novels,” and “library editions” of the nineteenth century, and the “Little Blue Books” started in 1919 by Emanuel Haldeman-Julius, have each been considered successive cycles of American “paperback revolutions,” the new mass-market paperback schemes that began in the 1940s constituted the biggest paperback revolution of all, substantially widening the reading public’s access to books.⁴⁹ Before the 1940s, bookstores generally did not exist outside of large cities and college towns. Thomas Bonn writes, “The *New York Times* stated in 1960 that the estimated 1,450 bookstores in the United States had not increased in number in a century.”⁵⁰ Kenneth Davis roughly corroborates these low figures: “In the entire country, there were only some four thousand places where a book could be purchased, and most of these were gift shops and stationery stores that carried only a few

popular novels. In reality, there were but five hundred or so legitimate bookstores. . . . [Most of these were] in the nation's twelve largest cities."⁵¹ Pocket Books, launched in 1939 by Robert de Graff, revolutionized the industry by refusing to limit book distribution to these few bookstores.

By 1941, Pocket Books had arranged with four independent wholesale distributors of magazines and tabloids to distribute their books into newsstand, drugstore, grocery store, and variety store accounts; in this way Pocket Books reached a new set of retail outlets across the country whose numbers were an estimated hundred thousand strong—a dramatic increase. For example, already by May of 1941, “six outlets existed in Columbus [Ohio] for hardcover books. However, Pocket Books were sold at 224 places in the same area.”⁵² In a short time 75 to 80 percent of Pocket’s business went via these wholesalers.⁵³ As Bonn rightly concludes, “true mass distribution had been achieved.”⁵⁴ Whereas hardcover books averaged \$1.95, Pocket Books and its competitors sold their paperbacks for twenty-five cents. After two years in existence, the total sales of Pocket Books were an incredible 8.5 million copies, and by 1949, Pocket could claim it had exceeded the combined unit sales of all the best-selling titles published in the United States since 1880.⁵⁵

These figures have profound implications for lesbian representation during this time, because along with the change in distribution practices comes the institutionalization of category literature, which was just beginning as a publishing phenomenon in the 1950s, and of which lesbian pulps are a part. The biggest publisher of pro-lesbian pulps, for example, Fawcett, was primarily known as a publisher of category literature, including westerns, mysteries, and male-oriented thrillers. To publishers, the last category was the one to which lesbian pulps belonged. This successful category has been variously called the “illicit love/soft porn genre,” “male adventures,” “erotic fiction,” or “masculine adventure romance.”⁵⁶ These books are milder than the titles suggest, with breasts discussed but no descriptions of body parts below the waist except legs. While the genealogy of lesbian pulps can be traced back to the female romance and to more literary lesbian fiction, the immediate roots remain in the male adventure genre.

The third crucial change was the invention of the paperback original. After reprinting all available hardcovers as mass-market paperbacks—the normal course of things until that time—the paperback houses still needed more books to satisfy the steeply increased demand. Fawcett solved the problem by inventing the “paperback original,” marking the first time paperback books were published without earlier hardcover editions (and so, without being reviewed by the press). And, as Kate Adams argues, “paperback original publishing ex-

panded the market for potboilers, but it also allowed controversial or marginal texts to come into print.”⁵⁷ It is not accidental that Fawcett, having published Tereska Torres and Vin Packer, went on to publish Ann Aldrich, Ann Bannon, and the most pro-lesbian pulps of any press. Of the five largest paperback houses in the United States, Fawcett, probably due to its early success, was the only one to regularly publish lesbian pulps.

Before the 1950s many lesbians would not have heard of any author other than, perhaps, Radclyffe Hall. The 1934 Hays Film Code’s ban on any depiction of homosexuality continued in Hollywood film until 1961, and the nascent television industry of the 1950s did not show homosexuals. In addition, before 1950, publishers offered only a few literary lesbian texts. Yet, astonishingly, given the homophobia of the time, the need among lesbians for lesbian representation was arguably satiated more than ever before in U.S. history—in quantity though not quality—because of the phenomenon of lesbian pulp novels with their new distribution mechanisms. There was simply an amazing quantity of books with lesbian themes cheaply and widely available during this time. In histories of paperback publishing, sales of a million during the 1950s and early 1960s are considered phenomenal, and such figures are cited as reasons for the start of a new genre or category.⁵⁸ While their existence is rarely noted in publishing history, lesbian-themed texts were also being bought by the millions during this time. According to Una Troubridge, the 1951 mass-market paperback version (thus a revamped pulp) of the lesbian classic *The Well of Loneliness* sold more than a hundred thousand copies a year during the 1960s.⁵⁹ Claire Morgan’s *The Price of Salt* (1952) had more than half a million copies in print by the arrival of the 1958 Bantam paperback edition; and by 1963, *The Ladder* estimated over a million copies in print.⁶⁰ Vin Packer writes in 2004 that her best seller *Spring Fire* sold more than 1.4 million copies in its first printing alone, and then immediately went into two more printings.⁶¹ One million copies means that one of every two hundred people (adults and children) in the United States might have purchased a copy of this one book. The lesbian pulp genre even became so successful that sometimes covers hinted at lesbianism though there was no lesbianism within.⁶²

The books, in sum, were everywhere, readily available even to the neophyte lesbian. As Lillian Faderman’s quickly satisfied search for lesbian fiction demonstrated, lesbian pulp was available in quantity, selling in towns lacking bookstores across the country. Kate Millett and Sally Gearheart each report owning entire collections of these books.⁶³ Joan Nestle summarizes, “But all across the country, Lesbians were doing it [buying lesbian pulps]; our need was greater than our shame.”⁶⁴

“Our need was greater than our shame”—pulp seem to prove that an oppressed group finds the fact of representation more important than the homophobia of that representation. It is the fact of representation that is crucial. Stuart Hall writes that there is no “authentic” black self outside of popular culture: “it is only through the way in which we represent and imagine ourselves that we come to know how we are constituted and who we are. There is no escape from the politics of representation.”⁶⁵ Thus representation is, even, essential to identity formation. I find his insistence on popular culture as the space of identity formation useful in approaching lesbian identity formation in the 1950s and early 1960s. Clearly lesbian identity was formed in a context of homophobia, in which it was primarily lesbian pulps that offered “how we are constituted and who we are.” The question of the quality of the representation—how this homophobia affected these generations—is difficult to gauge. I will limit myself to the question of quantity: here I speculatively argue, following Foucault, that the largest discourse on lesbianism in U.S. history to date helped to lead to the greatest number of women ever who identified openly as lesbians.

Thus pulp partially answers a central question in lesbian/gay/queer historiography, namely: what caused the dramatically quick and successful rise of gay liberation in the 1970s? Stonewall, the fight against police at a gay bar in New York City in June of 1969 now memorialized in Pride Parades across the world, and the start of the gay liberation movement it marks, is the fulcrum around which much recent lgbtq historiography turns. Historians have tried to explain Stonewall’s seemingly radical break with the past. Allan Bérubé argues, “Thirty years ago, the generation of World War II veterans began to lay the groundwork that made the Stonewall Rebellion and gay liberation possible.”⁶⁶ Lillian Faderman writes that the emerging awareness of lesbianism due to World War II and its repercussions “led the way to lesbian organizing in the next decade and can perhaps partially explain why the gay and lesbian-feminist revolutions caught fire as quickly as they did at the end of the 1960s.”⁶⁷ John D’Emilio suggests that the “relative ease with which gay liberationists accumulated victories can only be explained by the persistent, plodding work of the activists [in the three main homosexual activist groups] who preceded them.”⁶⁸ Alongside these reasons, lgbtq historians take into account broader cultural changes, including more freedom due to capitalism’s creation of wage labor outside the home and World War II mobilization (especially for women), the beats, the civil rights and black power movements, the student left and the Vietnam war, the counterculture, and the women’s liberation movement. On a different cultural register, the increasing proliferation of Freudian and sexo-

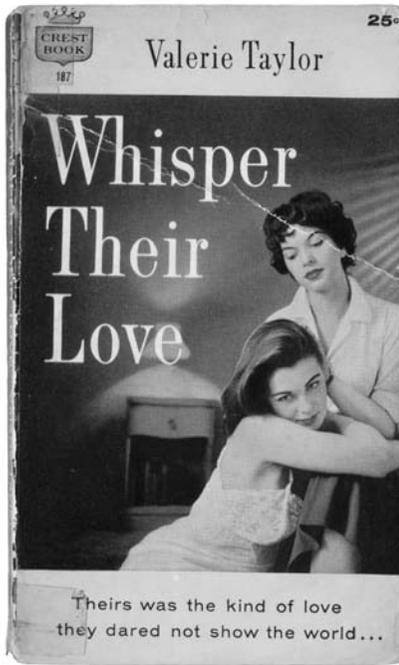


Figure 6. *Whisper Their Love*, by Valerie Taylor, one of the first pro-lesbian pulps (Fawcett, 1957).

logical discourse (Kinsey, etc.) is important, as well as the increasing knowledge of homosexuality due to scandal magazines and government hearings.

I augment these explanations with another—on the level of culture and discourse, not politics and activism—that emphasizes publishing, books, and reading practices. Particularly as exemplified in lesbian pulps, the homophobia of the 1950s and early 1960s can be viewed not as repression of what is already there, but as incitement, as creation of what was not there before. Foucault’s reasoning that the proliferation of discourse on sexuality created homosexuality in the nineteenth century as a category of identity—as opposed to an act that was sinful or criminal that anyone can perform—has purchase here. He writes:

The “putting into discourse of sex,” far from undergoing a process of restriction, on the contrary has been subjected to a mechanism of increasing incitement; that the techniques of power exercised over sex have not obeyed a principle of rigorous selection, but rather one of dissemination and implantation of polymorphous sexualities.⁶⁹

This is a useful way to understand the seemingly contradictory juxtaposition of the 1950s as “perhaps the worst time for women to love women in American history” (as Faderman writes),⁷⁰ with the proliferation of pulp novels, that is, the intermingling of outward repression or restriction, yes, but also very real effects of incitement and dissemination. Foucault writes of the putting into discourse of sex in the form of prohibitions as creating “a visible explosion of unorthodox sexualities.”⁷¹ Thus, the widespread dissemination of discourse embodied in lesbian pulp novels, intended for heterosexual voyeuristic male readers, would have had, and did have, unintended productive, exactly nonrepressive, effects. In effect, it put the word and idea of “lesbian” into

popular discourse, creating a category of people that had not—to most—existed before. Combined with the dissemination of discourse on sexology, Freud, and scandal magazines, the mass-market paperback revolution created the widest awareness of lesbianism in the United States up to that time, an awareness that allowed women living in urban or rural areas, in heterosexual marriages or “romantic friendships,” to name themselves as lesbian for the first time. It is because of this offering of a lesbian possibility that Lynch and Allegra find pulps necessary despite their homophobia. Quantity, in short, trumped quality. Ironically, a mostly heterosexual-male-oriented genre helped to create the largest generation of lesbians ever, women who would soon create or support the emergent, quick-blooming lesbian, gay, and women’s organizations and causes of the late 1960s and 1970s.

Notes

1. Lee Lynch, “Cruising the Libraries,” in *Lesbian Texts and Contexts*, ed. Karla Jay and Joanne Glasgow (New York: New York University Press, 1989), 40–41.
2. Donna Allegra, “Between the Sheets: My Sex Life in Literature,” in *Lesbian Erotics*, ed. Karla Jay (New York: New York University Press, 1995), 72.
3. First quote: Donna Allegra, “Butch on the Streets,” in *Fight Back! Feminist Resistance to Male Violence* (Minneapolis: Cleis Press, 1981), 45. Second quote: Allegra, “Between the Sheets,” 78.
4. Joan Nestle, “Desire So Big It Had to Be Brave: Ann Bannon’s Lesbian Novels,” *Ms.*, January 1983, Lesbian Herstory Archives, Brooklyn, New York, 2.
5. See also Terry Castle, ed. *The Literature of Lesbianism: A Historical Anthology from Ariosto to Stonewall* (New York: Columbia University Press, 2003). Castle acknowledges the influence of pornography in terms of quantity of lesbian images, but she does not discuss lesbian pulp.
6. Lillian Faderman, ed., *Chloe Plus Olivia: An Anthology of Lesbian Literature from the Seventeenth Century to the Present* (New York: Viking Penguin, 1994), vii.
7. *Ibid.*, vii.
8. *Ibid.*, viii, xi, 297.
9. Alison Hennegan, “On Becoming a Lesbian Reader,” in *Sweet Dreams: Sexuality, Gender and Popular Fiction*, ed. Susannah Radstone (London: Lawrence & Wishart, 1988), 165–90; Suzanna Danuta Walters, “As Her Hand Crept Slowly Up Her Thigh: Ann Bannon and the Politics of Pulp,” *Social Text: Theory/Culture/Ideology* 23.8 (1989): 83–101; Diane Hamer, “‘I Am a Woman’: Ann Bannon and the Writing of Lesbian Identity in the 1950s,” in *Lesbian and Gay Writing*, ed. Mark Lilly (New York: Macmillan, 1990); Angela Weir and Elizabeth Wilson, “The Greyhound Bus Station in the Evolution of Lesbian Popular Culture,” in *New Lesbian Criticism: Literary and Cultural Readings*, ed. Sally Munt (New York: Columbia University Press, 1992), 95–114; Michèle Aina Barale, “When Jack Blinks: Si(gh)ting Gay Desire in Ann Bannon’s *Beebo Brinker*,” in *The Lesbian and Gay Studies Reader*, ed. Henry Abelove, Michèle Aina Barale, and David M. Halperin (New York: Routledge, 1993), 604–15; Michèle Aina Barale, “Below the Belt: (Un)Covering *The Well of Loneliness*,” in *Inside/Out: Lesbian Theories, Gay Theories*, ed. Diana Fuss (New York: Routledge, 1991), 235–58; Donna Penn, “The Meanings of Lesbianism in Post-War America,” *Gender & History* 3.2 (summer 1991): 15–22; Kate Adams, “Making the World Safe for the Missionary Position: Images of the Lesbian in Post-World War II America,” in *Lesbian Texts and Contexts: Radical Revisions*, ed. Karla Jay and Joanne Glasgow (New York: New York University Press, 1990), 255–74; Susanna Bennis, “Sappho in Soft Cover: Notes on Lesbian Pulp,” in *Fireworks: The Best of Fireweed*, ed. Makeda Silvera (Toronto: The Women’s Press, 1986), 61–68.

10. Maida Tilchen and Fran Koski, "Some Pulp Sappho," *Margins* 23 (August 1975): 41–45 (reprinted in Karla Jay and Allen Young, eds., *Lavender Culture* [New York: Jove, 1979], 262–74); Dorothy Allison, "A Personal History of Lesbian Porn," in *Skin: Talking About Sex, Class, and Literature* (Ithaca, N.Y.: Firebrand Books, 1994); Roberta Yusba, "Odd Girls and Strange Sisters: Lesbian Pulp Novels of the '50s," *Out/Look* 12 (spring 1991): 34–37; Roberta Yusba, "Twilight Tales: Lesbian Pulps, 1950–1960," *On Our Backs* (summer 1985): 30+; Donna Allegra, "Between the Sheets 71–81; Donna Allegra, "Butch on the Streets"; Kate Brandt, *Happy Endings* (Tallahassee: Naiad Press, 1993); Andrea Loewenstein, "Sad Stories: A Reflection on the Fiction of Ann Bannon," *Gay Community News*, May 24, 1980, 8+; Eric Garber, ed., "Those Wonderful Lesbian Pulps: A Roundtable Discussion," *San Francisco Bay Area Gay and Lesbian Historical Society Newsletter* 4.4 (summer 1989): 1+; Eric Garber, ed., "Those Wonderful Lesbian Pulps," part 2, *San Francisco Bay Area Gay and Lesbian Historical Society Newsletter* 4.5 (fall 1989): 7–8; Susan Stryker, *Queer Pulp: Perverted Passions from the Golden Age of the Paperback* (San Francisco: Chronicle Books, 2001); Lee Server, *Over My Dead Body: The Sensational Age of the American Paperback: 1945–1955* (San Francisco: Chronicle Books, 1994); Jaye Zimet, *Strange Sisters: The Art of Lesbian Pulp Fiction 1949–1969* (New York: Viking Studio/Penguin Putnam, 1999).
11. *Forbidden Love: The Unashamed Stories of Lesbian Lives*, a movie directed by Aerlyn Weissman and Lynne Fernie (Canada, 1992); "'Pulp' Celebrates Lesbian Paperbacks," *Tempo* section, *Chicago Tribune*, February 12, 2004. *Pulp* is written by Chicago playwright Patricia Kane. For Web sites see Stryker, 125; Zimet, 153–54.
12. Lisa Walker, "Afterword," in Valerie Taylor's *The Girls in 3-B* (New York: The Feminist Press, 2003); Yvonne Keller, "Pulp Politics: Strategies of Vision in Lesbian Pulp Novels, 1955–1965," in *The Queer Sixties*, ed. Patricia Juliana Smith (New York: Routledge, 1999); Christopher Nealon, *Foundlings: Lesbian and Gay Historical Emotion Before Stonewall* (Durham, N.C.: Duke University Press, 2001); Michael Bronski, *Pulp Friction: Uncovering the Golden Age of Gay Male Pulps* (New York: St. Martin's Press, 2003); David Bergman, ed., *Camp Grounds: Style and Homosexuality* (Amherst: University of Massachusetts Press, 1993); David Bergman, "The Cultural Work of Sixties Gay Pulp Fiction," in *The Queer Sixties*, ed. Patricia Juliana Smith.
13. For the phrase "golden age," see Barbara Grier, 1981, quoted on teaser page of Paula Christian's *The Other Side of Desire* (Paperback Library, 1965; New Milford, Conn.: Timely Books, 1981). See also inside cover, March Hastings, *Three Women* (New York: Beacon, 1958; Tallahassee: Naiad Press, 1989). Kate Adams uses this phrase ("what has been called the 'golden age' of lesbian pulp fiction") without referencing a source ("Making the World Safe," 259). See also Grier, "The Lesbian Paperback," 325.
14. Stryker finds more than fifty titles of transgender pulp (73–95).
15. See Barbara Grier: "The first to appear was, ironically, one of the finest, *Women's Barracks*, by Tereska Torres"; Barbara Grier, "The Lesbian Paperback," in *The Lesbian's Home Journal: Stories from the Ladder*, ed. Barbara Grier and Coletta Reid (Baltimore: Diana Press, 1976), 314 (originally published under the pseudonym Gene Damon, *Tangents* 1.9 [June 1966]: 4+). See also Kate Adams, "Making the World Safe," 259. Lee Server considers it a precursor and finds *Spring Fire* the first in the genre (51). Packer herself claims *Spring Fire* to be the first (introduction, Cleis Press edition).
16. Tereska Torres, *Women's Barracks* (Greenwich, Conn.: Fawcett, 1950).
17. Adams, "Making the World Safe," 260.
18. Alice Payne Hackett and James Henry Burke, *Eighty Years of Bestsellers: 1895–1975* (New York: Bowker, 1977), 16.
19. Vin Packer, *Spring Fire* (Greenwich, Conn.: Fawcett Gold Medal, 1952), 155; editor's view: Meaker quoted in Server, 52.
20. Marijane Meaker, "Marijane Meaker," transcribed talk, in "Those Wonderful Lesbian Pulps," part 2, 7.
21. Walters, "As Her Hand," 84.
22. Valerie Taylor, "Valerie Taylor," transcribed talk, in "Those Wonderful Lesbian Pulps: A Roundtable Discussion," 1.
23. Paula Christian, "Paula Christian," transcribed talk, in "Those Wonderful Lesbian Pulps: A Roundtable Discussion," 1.
24. See Hastings for quote: March Hastings, "March Hastings," transcribed talk, in "Those Wonderful Lesbian Pulps," part 2, 8. See also Marijane Meaker quoted in Server, 52.
25. For obscenity decisions, see Kenneth C. Davis, *Two-Bit Culture: The Paperbacking of America* (Boston: Houghton Mifflin, 1984), 216–47, esp. 242–47.
26. Hastings, "March Hastings," 8.

27. Christian, "Paula Christian," 5.
28. Bonnie Zimmerman, *The Safe Sea of Women: Lesbian Fiction, 1969–1989* (Boston: Beacon, 1990), xii, 10.
29. Lesbian pulps are rarely mentioned in the scholarship on popular genres, histories of the 1950s, or publishing histories of the post-1941 paperback era. Histories of 1950s publishing simply note the negative attention *Women's Barracks* and *Spring Fire* received in the hearings of the 1952 House of Representatives Committee on Current Pornographic Materials (Server is a valuable exception; see esp. 52–53). For an overview of 1950s publishing see Ray Walters, *Paperback Talk* (Chicago: Academy Chicago, 1985); Thomas L. Bonn, *UnderCover: An Illustrated History of American Mass Market Paperbacks* (New York: Penguin, 1982); Davis, *Two-Bit Culture*. Bonn and Davis make brief reference to lesbian pulp in the context of the hearings (Bonn, 70; Davis, 224). See Adams for discussion of the attacks on Torres's book ("Making the World Safe," 257–58).
30. Jeannette H. Foster, *Sex Variant Women in Literature: A Historical and Quantitative Survey* (New York: Vantage Press, 1956); reprinted, with an afterword by Barbara Grier (Baltimore: Diana Press, 1975). Citations from Vantage Press edition: 295, 309.
31. Barbara Grier, *The Lesbian in Literature*, 3rd ed. (Tallahassee: Naiad Press, 1981), xix–xx.
32. Grier, "Lesbian Paperback," 313.
33. *Ibid.*
34. Lillian Faderman, *Surpassing the Love of Men: Romantic Friendship and Love Between Women from the Renaissance to the Present* (New York: Morrow, 1981), 355–56, 378, 383, 392; Lillian Faderman, *Odd Girls and Twilight Lovers: A History of Lesbian Life in Twentieth Century America* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1991), 146–47, 185; John D'Emilio, *Sexual Politics, Sexual Communities: The Making of a Homosexual Minority in the United States, 1940–1970* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1983), 135; Zimmerman, *Safe Sea*, 9, 13, 22, 31.
35. Michael Denning, *Cover Stories: Narrative and Ideology in the British Spy Thriller* (New York: Routledge, 1987), 9.
36. *Ibid.*, 11.
37. Lynch, "Cruising," 43.
38. Barbara Grier, interview by the author, Gulf Coast, Florida, July 27 and 28, 1991; Grier, "Lesbian Paperback"; D'Emilio, "Sexual Politics," 134.
39. Cover, Joan Ellis, *In the Shadows* (New York: Midwood-Tower, 1962).
40. Janet Pritchard, *Warped Women* (New York: Beacon Books, 1951); Della Martin, *Twilight Girl* (New York: Beacon Books, 1961); Reed Marr, *Women Without Men* (Greenwich, Conn.: Fawcett Gold Medal, 1957).
41. Server, "Over My Dead Body," 47.
42. *Ibid.*, 64.
43. On sexual saturation see Denning, *Cover Stories*, esp. 102–13.
44. *Ibid.*, 59–60.
45. Karen Vierneisel, "An Annotated Checklist of Lesbian Feminist Resources," *Margins* 23 (August 1975): 11.
46. Judy Grahn, *Another Mother Tongue: Gay Words, Gay Worlds* (Boston: Beacon, 1984), xi.
47. Allan Bérubé, "Marching to a Different Drummer: Lesbian and Gay GIs in World War II," in *Powers of Desire: The Politics of Sexuality*, ed. Ann Snitow, Christine Stansell, and Sharon Thompson (New York: Monthly Review Press, 1983), 98; Barbara Epstein, "Anti-Communism, Homophobia, and the Construction of Masculinity in the Postwar U.S.," *Critical Sociology* 20.3 (1994): 21–44; Donna McBride, interview by the author, Gulf Coast, Florida, July 27 and 28, 1991; Blue (Doris) Lunden, interview by the author, Women's Community, Upper Sugarloaf Key, Florida, July 20, 1991.
48. On state oppression against gay men and lesbians see D'Emilio, *Making Trouble*, 60–61.
49. Bonn, *UnderCover*, 25–33, 35–38.
50. *Ibid.*, 64.
51. Davis, *Two-Bit Culture*, 16.
52. Bonn, *UnderCover*, 42.
53. Davis, *Two-Bit Culture*, 47.
54. Bonn, *UnderCover*, 42.
55. Sales after two years, Davis, *Two-Bit Culture*, 43; Pocket's 1949 claim, Bonn, *UnderCover*, 42.
56. The "illicit love/soft porn genre," Jeff Weinstein, "In Praise of Pulp: Bannon's Lusty Lesbians," *Village Voice Literary Supplement*, October 1983, 9; "male adventures," John Tebbel, *Between Covers: The Rise*

- and *Transformation of Book Publishing in America* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1987), 464; “erotic fiction,” Server, *Over My Dead Body*, 51; and “masculine adventure romance,” Denning, *Cover Stories*, 31.
57. Adams, “Making the World Safe,” 259.
 58. Janice A. Radway, *Reading the Romance: Women, Patriarchy, and Popular Literature* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 1984), 30–31.
 59. Quoted in Esther Newton, “The Mythic Mannish Lesbian: Radclyffe Hall and the New Woman,” *Signs* 9.4 (summer 1984): 559.
 60. Claire Morgan [Patricia Highsmith], *The Price of Salt* (Coward McCann, 1952; New York: Bantam, 1953; New York: Bantam, 1958), front cover. *The Ladder* 7.7 (April 1963): 14.
 61. Vin Packer [Marijane Meaker], *Spring Fire* (Fawcett Gold Medal; San Francisco: Cleis Press, 2004, repr.); introduction by Vin Packer, viii.
 62. See, for example, the 1952 edition of Norma Ciraco’s *Detour*. Roberta Yusba, “Odd Girls,” 34.
 63. Kate Millett, *Flying* (New York: Knopf, 1974), 162–63; D’Emilio, *Sexual Politics*, 135.
 64. Nestle, “Desire,” 2.
 65. Stuart Hall, “What Is This ‘Black’ in Black Popular Culture?” in *Stuart Hall: Critical Dialogues in Cultural Studies*, ed. David Morley and Kuan-Hsing Chen (New York, Routledge, 1996), 473.
 66. Bérubé, “Marching,” 99.
 67. Faderman, *Odd Girls*, 128.
 68. D’Emilio, *Sexual Politics*, 240.
 69. Michel Foucault, *The History of Sexuality*, vol. 1, *An Introduction* (New York: Vintage, 1978), 12.
 70. Faderman, *Odd Girls*, 157.
 71. Foucault, *History of Sexuality*, 49.