CHAPTER 8

Queer Literatures

This chapter gives an overview of homosexuality literature that is self-consciously written to represent LGBTQ desires and intimacies. We trace the development of queer literary traditions starting with Walt Whitman, whose literary output overlapped with the creation of sexological categories and the emergence of homosexuality as an identity.

Whitman and His Descendants

Walt Whitman (1819–1892) is generally acknowledged to be among the very finest of 19th-century American poets. To some, Whitman was the “good grey poet” singing an epic of America and placing himself at the center of its national life. To others, he was the notorious Mr. Whitman, whose unabashed descriptions of the human “body electric” shocked buttoned-up Victorian-era Americans who virtuously forbade their innocent daughters from reading him. To still others, his long, free-verse lines and philosophy of personal liberation positioned him as a harbinger of literary modernism. And finally, to a small but growing cadre of late 19th-century men, Whitman was the prophet of homosexuality, openly celebrating love between men. From his own time through today, gay advocates have pointed to Whitman’s life and work as important expressions of early gay consciousness.
Whitman’s principal life work was *Leaves of Grass*, a collection of poems first published in 1855 and subsequently revised, enhanced, and expanded to the point that, at the poet’s death in 1892, it had appeared in at least seven different versions. The 1860 edition of *Leaves of Grass* introduced a group of poems under the title “Calamus,” referring to the phallus-shaped calamus plant, which in turn is associated with the ancient Greek god Kalamos, who was transformed through grief at the death of his male lover. The Calamus poems openly celebrate what Whitman called “adhesiveness,” the “love that fuses, ties and aggregates, making the races comrades, and fraternizing all,” as distinguished from “individualism, which isolates” (*Poetry and Prose* 973). In Calamus 1, “In Paths Untrodden,” the poet describes himself as

> Resolved to sing no songs to-day but those of manly attachment,
> . . . To tell the secret of my nights and days,
> To celebrate the needs of comrades. (268)

Throughout *Leaves of Grass*, Whitman proclaims his “adhesive” love for men and refers to God in the same terms:

> My rendezvous is appointed, it is certain.
> The Lord will be there and wait till I come on perfect terms,
> The great Camerado, the lover true for whom I pine will be there. (241)

Within the context of 19th-century Western culture, intimate expressions between men (and women, for that matter) were not uncommon, even if not explicitly sexual in nature. The idea of romantic (nonsexual) friendship can be traced through much writing of the period. But Whitman’s gestures move beyond the platonically romantic; in fact, the poet suggests that the uncensored language of sexuality, particularly in the Calamus poems, will doubtless shock and offend some potential readers:

> Through me forbidden voices,
> Voices of sexes and lusts . . . voices veiled, and I remove the veil,
> Voices indecent by me clarified and transfigured. (50)

“Who but I,” wrote Whitman in “Starting from Paumanok” in 1860, “should be the poet of comrades?” (179).

The open secret of his homoerotic interests, plainly articulated from the first appearance of *Leaves of Grass*, revolted many contemporary critics and reviewers.
Rufus Griswold, for example, reviewing *Leaves of Grass* for the New York *Criterion* in 1855, excoriated Whitman for indulging in a “degrading, beastly sensuality that is fast rotting the healthy core of all the social virtues” (24). Still, Whitman and his poetry fascinated people far and near. John Addington Symonds, an Englishman a generation younger than Whitman, declared himself a “Whitmanian” and initiated in 1871 a correspondence with the older poet that was to last until Whitman’s death in 1892. In his biography of Symonds, Rictor Norton sees the writer’s obsession with Whitman as part of a lifelong effort to make sense of his own homosexuality. It took Symonds 20 years to work up the courage to ask Whitman directly whether, as the Calamus poems clearly “prais[ed] and propagat[ed] a passionate affection between men,” the “delicate difficulties” surrounding physical sex might properly be left to “the persons’ own sense of what is right and fit” (Norton). In other words, Symonds hoped that Whitman was making a place for physical sex between men. Imagine Symonds’s disappointment when Whitman wrote back that his “morbid inferences” concerning homosexuality “are disavow’d by me & seem damnable” (Katz 349). Still, despite Whitman’s refusal during his lifetime to advocate publicly the new sexual inversion identity named by the sexologists [*Chapter 2*], his practice of “adhesive” love combined with his vast fame to humanize homosexuality.

Among the many 20th-century poets who identified with Whitman was Portuguese Modernist Fernando Pessoa (1888–1935). Actually, it is misleading to attribute the poem “Saúdação a Walt Whitman” (“Greetings to Walt Whitman,” 1915) to Pessoa because, like most of his work, “Saúdação” appeared under the name of one of Pessoa’s *heteronyms*, or aliases—in this case, Álvaro de Campos. (Even Pessoa’s core identity is suspect as *pessoa* means “person” or “persona” in Portuguese.) The Álvaro de Campos who composed “Saúdação” was a Whitmanesque *pessoa* who could write in “Tabacaria” (Tobacco Shop), “tenho em mim todos os sonhos do mundo” (“I hold in myself all the dreams of the world”). In “Saúdação,” Campos addresses Whitman as a “grande pederasta” and exclaims, “Quantas vezes eu beijo o teu retrato!” (“How many times I kiss thy portrait!”). Here we see Campos insisting upon a connection to his “grande herói . . . Cantor da fraternidade” (“great hero . . . singer of brotherhood”).

Just as Symonds and Pessoa/Campos imagined a link with Whitman, gay literary critic Newton Arvin (1900–1963) unmasked the poet’s “abnormal sexuality” (273) to de-pathologize and empower it. In 1938, when Arvin wrote *Whitman*, the phenomenon of sexual inversion had emerged from sexological obscurity into the popular consciousness and was considered an illness [*Chapter 3*]. The first four chapters of Arvin’s book argue for a view of Whitman as a social progressive, even a radical; then, in the fifth chapter, Arvin switches gears and takes up the issue of Whitman’s homosexuality, a daring move at that time. He points to the preface to the 1876 edition of *Leaves of Grass*, where Whitman announces that “the special
meaning of the *Calamus* cluster . . . mainly resides in its Political significance* (Selected Poems 359). Arvin concludes that although Whitman was “unmistakably homosexual” (274), he was no “mere invert” (277) but rather a transcendent “poet of fraternity” (280) in whose hands sexual inversion became “as strong and normal an emotion in men as love between the sexes” (272). Arvin, in short, pleads for a critical interpretation of Whitman that rehabilitates homosexuality. Sadly, in 1960, Arvin was arrested for possession of pornographic material (most of which consisted of physique pictorial magazines such as those discussed in Chapter 9) and fired from his teaching position at Smith College.

The combination of Whitman’s proto-gay “adhesiveness” and his unmistakable poetic style exerted a powerful influence on generations of 20th-century queer poets. Langston Hughes (1902–1967), arguably the finest of the Harlem Renaissance poets, wrote with a decidedly Whitmanesque sensibility, especially in his early poems, which adopt Whitman’s use of colloquial language and his concern with democratic inclusiveness to address the position of blacks in a racist society. The Beat poets of the 1950s, particularly Allen Ginsberg (1926–1997), praised and emulated Whitman’s expansive vision of a humanistic America. Ginsberg’s “A Supermarket in California” (1955) specifically addresses Whitman the lover of boys, and his epic “Howl” (written in 1955) echoes Whitman’s self-styled “barbaric yawp” (*Poetry and Prose* 247). Judy Grahn’s (b. 1940) *Common Woman* poems (1969) and *A Woman Is Talking to Death* (1974) embody some of the same Whitmanian content and style. June Jordan (1936–2002), activist poet, writer, and teacher, praised the “politicizing significance of bisexual affirmation . . . to insist upon the equal validity of all the components of social/sexual complexity” (“June Jordan”). Jordan’s poetry also references Whitman’s style; we see this clearly in “Poem for South African Women” (1980). We can see it as well in Audre Lorde’s poem “A Woman Speaks” and her biomythography *Zami*, through their relentless expansiveness and their reimagining of the outside world with respect to the inner reality of the same-sex-loving person. We also see it in the use to which later writers, such as Charley Shively, put Whitman’s life and work. Shively, a fiery gay activist and scholar known for burning a Bible during his keynote speech at the 1977 Boston Gay Pride rally and for serving as founding editor of the early gay publication *Fag Rag*, edited two collections of Whitman’s letters to young men. In these volumes, *Calamus Lovers* (1987) and *Drum Beats* (1989), Shively insists upon Whitman’s overt homosexuality, not hesitating to use late 20th-century terms (such as *butch*, *basket*, *gay*, *boyfriend*, *queen*, *queer*, and the like) anachronistically to argue for an essentialist reading of Whitman. While Shively may be committing the presentist fallacy, Lorde’s and Jordan’s uses of Whitman speak to their desire to
expand a powerful poetic tradition, particularly in their cases by directly addressing issues of race and gender that Whitman did not.

**Oscar Wilde**

Whitman died in 1892 without publicly asserting a homosexual identity. At the same time, the Irish writer Oscar Wilde was establishing a worldwide reputation, generated in part by his flamboyant and even scandalous identity as an aesthete. Already famous for his brilliant conversation, controversial writings, and public behavior, Wilde was enjoying great success in London’s theater district with sold-out performances of *The Importance of Being Earnest*. He was also parading around London with the young Lord Alfred Douglas (nicknamed “Bosie”), his lover of several years. Their public antics incited Douglas’s father, the hot-headed Marquess of Queensbury, to call Wilde a “Somdomite,” a misspelling of “Sodomite.” In response, Wilde injudiciously decided to bring a libel suit against Queensbury. Wilde’s suit was dismissed; during the deliberations, however, Queensbury’s lawyers unearthed evidence that Wilde had consorted with a variety of young working-class men. Wilde was arrested on charges of “gross indecency,” pursuant to a relatively recent law that criminalized sexual conduct between men. Wilde’s first trial with him as the defendant ended in a hung jury, but at the second trial, he was convicted and sentenced to the maximum punishment, two years of hard labor. Three years after being released from Reading Gaol, Wilde died in France a broken and impoverished man.

Wilde’s three trials were among the most widely covered and discussed legal proceedings of their time; reports of them even broadcast via the transatlantic cable. During the trials, prosecutors focused on locating passages from Wilde’s writings to corroborate other testimony supporting his supposed “gross indecency.” Prosecutor Edward Carson read portions of the author’s early poems and letters to Bosie where Wilde wrote romantically,

![Oscar Wilde and Lord Alfred Douglas.](Image)
even effusively, about their friendship. Carson also quoted from Wilde’s novel, *The Picture of Dorian Gray*, in which the artist Basil Hallward accuses the increasingly corrupt Dorian of deleterious influences on his acquaintances. Hallward asks Dorian, “Why is your friendship so fatal to young men? There was that wretched boy in the Guards who committed suicide. You were his great friend. There was Sir Henry Ashton, who had to leave England with a tarnished name” (Wilde 117). Carson pressed Wilde to name the “unnatural vice” alluded to in these passages, strongly insinuating that literature depicting immoral acts or feelings could contribute to the degradation of those reading it:

C[arson]—Am I right in saying that you do not consider the effect [when writing] in creating morality or immorality?

W[ilde]—Certainly, I do not.

C—So far as your works are concerned, you pose as not being concerned about morality or immorality? . . .

W— . . . I have no pose in this matter. In writing a play or a book, I am concerned entirely with literature—that is, with art. I am not at doing good or evil, but in trying to make a thing that will have some quality of beauty. (“The Trials of Oscar Wilde”)

Wilde’s attempt to focus purely on aesthetic concerns proved an unfortunate strategy for his defense, making it appear that he had something to hide.

Carson’s efforts to conflate the man and the work to damn them both led Wilde to defend his book, even implying that Dorian’s demise at the end of the novel suggested that the story had a moral end. But the damage had already been done. In the famous preface to *Dorian Gray*, Wilde had written that “[t]here is no such thing as a moral or an immoral book. Books are well written, or badly written. That is all” (3). By the time of the trial, many in the public were fully willing to believe that Wilde was not only writing about but also involved in a variety of immoral activities, particularly with other men, and that he was a potential danger to society. His writing and celebrity created nothing less than a moral panic (see below), and some members of the public expressed relief when the author was sent off to prison. Author Eliza Lynn Linton, for example, remarked in late 1895,

Happily here the chief offender seems to have suddenly subsided—to have gone out like some noxious vapour which flared for a time over fetid marshes, luring the unwary into perils worse than death itself. The world is the cleaner by his absence—the cleaner and less ugly. (41)

Wilde’s trials seem to have presaged future public debates about homosexed literature and art; they helped position government agencies as protective of their citizens, safeguarding them against “unnatural” influences. In Carson’s words, the
public should be protected from books with “perverted moral views” (qtd. in Wilde 355). As sexologists were developing categories that helped to create a visible homosexual identity [Chapter 2], legal structures began containing its expression, particularly its potential spread to the innocent. Sometimes the legal response manifested as censorship of books and other written materials. Censorship often arises from a desire to protect the innocent, often women and children, from sexual values that certain queer art seems to propagate—sexual libertinism, sexual freedom, and even transcendence or obliteration of sexual boundaries. This impulse to focus on offending texts to encourage public outcry against transgressive behavior can create what Stan Cohen has termed moral panic. In a period of moral panic,

[a] condition, episode, person or group of persons emerges to become defined as a threat to societal values and interests. . . . Sometimes the panic is passed over and forgotten, but at other times it has more serious and long term repercussions and it might produce changes in legal and social policy or even in the way in which societies conceive themselves. (9)

Not all censorship is the result of moral panic, but most censorship of homosexed art and literature occurs at cultural moments when the fear of corruption by sexually deviant material is framed as a pervasive social problem. And such fear of corruption lay at the heart of Wilde’s trial—and in the trial about The Well of Loneliness, which we consider in the next section.

Radclyffe Hall

Radclyffe Hall’s novel The Well of Loneliness was the first to insist upon a literary space for the female sexual invert. The obscenity trials that resulted in the suppression of the book in England portrayed its subject as dangerous. Even more, the Well of Loneliness trials represented a moral panic in that an entire potential subject for literature—lesbianism—was prohibited for half a century afterward. First published by Jonathan Cape in late July 1928, The Well of Loneliness contained an introduction-cum-endorsement by sexologist Havelock Ellis [Chapter 2] and was generally recognized as a “long and very serious novel entirely upon the subject of sexual inversion” (Hall, qtd. in Doan 1). After a few weeks of thoughtful reviews in the press and relatively brisk sales at bookstores, the London Sunday Express printed a sensational editorial by journalist James Douglas. “I would rather give a healthy boy or a healthy girl a phial of prussic acid than this novel,” wrote Douglas; “Poison kills the body, but moral poison kills the soul” (10). Suddenly the terms of the debate were altered, and many Britons took sides. Generally speaking, conservative traditionalists such as Home Secretary William Joynson-Hicks took
the view that Hall’s novel should be suppressed to protect the innocent “young generation” from so much as recognizing the existence of a potentially “polluting” practice such as lesbianism. Liberals, free-speech advocates, and literary figures, by contrast, supported the book as a “work of art finely conceived and finely written” (“Review” 13).

In the wake of Douglas’s broadside, publisher Cape took a rash action: he sent a copy of the book to the Home Office, accompanied by a letter promising to withdraw it should it be found obscene. Presumably, Cape thought that Douglas’s hypocritical “social purity” argument would fall flat with Joynson-Hicks. He could not anticipate that Joynson-Hicks would discuss the book with Sir Archibald Bodkin, the director of public prosecutions, and with Sir Chartres Biron, the Bow Street magistrate; all three men were members of what Laura Doan calls “fringe organizations, with narrow interests in reviving religious values and policing public morality” (21). Joynson-Hicks, feeling that “there must be some limit to the freedom of what a man may write or speak in this great country of ours,” especially when, in his opinion, “what is written or spoken makes one of the least of these little ones offend,” ruled that *The Well of Loneliness* should be suppressed (qtd. in Souhami 208). This would have been the end of the matter had not the prescient Cape arranged to have Well reprinted and sold under a French imprint. The French edition began appearing in London bookstores, and the police were finally directed to impound all copies they could find. The book (not the author) was put on trial for obscenity.

In the two weeks between the announcement and the trial, battle lines were drawn. Although some appeared to fall in with the obscenity faction, many found the court’s procedures and opinions repulsive. The *Daily Herald* made fun of Joynson-Hicks and Bodkin: “They, stifling their natural horror and disgust, plough
through all the naughty books, heroically risking any possible shocks to their chaste minds in order to safeguard the innocent British public” (“Gadfly”). Publisher Geoffrey Faber complained that if the censors had their way, “the whole of the content of English literature is to be restricted in future to such stuff as Sir William thinks it safe to put in the hands of a schoolgirl” (qtd. in Souhami 208). Such protests were unavailing. In what Marc Vargo calls “arguably the most biased obscenity trial in the history of Great Britain” (63), in which Magistrate Biron refused to hear the testimony of expert witnesses, _Well_ was found to be obscene, and all copies were ordered destroyed. The appeal two weeks later was denied by the same court, and that was that. Interestingly, nothing in the book itself was actually found to be obscene (its sexiest line is probably “And that night they were not divided,” referring to the hero Stephen Gordon and her lover Mary Llewellyn). It was the subject of lesbianism that was potentially corrupting; indeed, after the British trial in 1928, openly lesbian literature did not appear in England again for more than 50 years.

In the United States, _Well_ fared considerably better. It was challenged in late 1928, but the trial differed from its British predecessor in two important ways: (1) Discussion of literary merit and testimony of expert witnesses were permitted, and (2) the justices assigned to decide the case made a point of reading the book before they passed judgment. They concluded that the accusation of obscenity was a matter of literary taste because _Well_ did not violate any existing obscenity laws. Therefore, they found it not obscene and not subject to any limitation concerning sale or distribution.

It is worthwhile to consider the trials of _The Well of Loneliness_ in the context of other widely publicized literary obscenity cases of the 1920s. In 1921, in a case brought by the New York Society for the Suppression of Vice, a trial court found James Joyce’s novel _Ulysses_ obscene; it was also banned in England. D. H. Lawrence’s novel _Lady Chatterley’s Lover_ was banned in 1928 (its year of publication) in both the United States and the United Kingdom; its classification as obscene was not overturned for 30 years. The _Well_ American trial bears on the _Ulysses_ case in that the finding that _Well_ was not obscene rested on it being found not to be pornographic. The same legal logic obtained in 1933 when a U.S. court overturned the obscenity ruling against _Ulysses_, declaring it not pornographic and therefore not obscene. The U.S. _Lady Chatterley_ and _Well_ cases provide a point of fruitful comparison. The origins of the complaints against these texts are similar in that the complainants attempt to create a moral panic around sexual expression represented in literature. However, the two trials highlight the contingent nature of the outcomes of the censoring impulse; different books, different judges, and slightly different times produce different results.
The suppression of *The Well of Loneliness* in the United Kingdom seems to have had a number of long-term, negative effects. Radclyffe Hall herself was ill off and on for years after the trials; she attributed her bouts of poor health to residual stress from them. She also wrote no more lesbian novels after *Well*. Nor, it might be added, did anyone else; potential authors of books about love between women seemed to have been temporarily scared off by the hysteria around *Well*. Most seriously, writes Diana Souhami, “By this trial, the government stigmatized and criminalized a kind of love. Its idiocy echoed down the years, silencing writers, consigning people to concealment of their deepest feelings and to public scorn” (237). The obscenity ruling, like the Pirie-Woods libel suit from 1811 [*Chapter 1*] and the recasting of the lesbian plot of Lillian Hellman’s *The Children’s Hour* as a heterosexual love triangle in the 1930s [*Chapter 9*], contributed to the erasure of lesbian art and lesbian lives from the popular consciousness.

The conflation of literature and life that contributed to the gross indecency conviction of Oscar Wilde in 1895 and the Home Office’s obscenity finding concerning *The Well of Loneliness* in 1928 represented legal milestones functioning to suppress LGBTQ writing throughout much of the first half of the 20th century in the United States and the United Kingdom. Some literature of the early to mid-century, to be sure, appeared despite the censors. Lesbian works such as Virginia Woolf’s *Orlando* (1928), Djuna Barnes’s *Ladies Almanack* (1928), and Gertrude Stein’s *The Autobiography of Alice B. Toklas* (1936) avoided suppression through use of an intensely coded style that obscured the homosexed content. Certain gay male writers—Truman Capote (1924–1984) and Gore Vidal (1925–2012), for example—parlayed their maleness and their access to publishing venues into contracts with big-name companies. Still, even they were stymied by the McCarthy anticommunist, anti-homosexual witch hunts of the early 1950s [*Chapter 3*], during which some books (*The Well of Loneliness*, Vidal’s *The City and the Pillar* from 1948), previously available in handsome cloth bindings, vanished from upscale bookstores and reappeared in pulp editions at bus stations and drugstores.

The fever broke in the 1960s, partly through new legislation that legalized a wider range of literary expression and partly through the rise of countercultural movements that established their own small presses. The 1959 Obscene Publications Act in the United Kingdom was found not to apply if the challenged work possessed so-called literary merit. In the United States, an obscenity ruling against the film version of *Lady Chatterley’s Lover* was overturned by the Supreme Court in 1959 on the basis of the First Amendment guarantee of freedom of speech. The lifting of these restrictions led directly to the general availability of previously suppressed (heterosexual) works such as *Lady Chatterley* and Henry Miller’s *Tropic of
Cancer. Soon thereafter, new presses specializing in LGBTQ subjects—Daughters, Gay Sunshine, Naiad, Crossing, and others—brought out hundreds of books, both originals and reprints, and helped build a body of homosexed literature in the 1970s and 1980s. In Chapter 3, we described the right-wing backlash against newly visible gay and lesbian movements that began with Anita Bryant in the late 1970s. Bryant, like journalist James Douglas half a century earlier, framed her Save the Children campaign as an effort to protect the innocent from the corrupting influence of homosexuality.

**Lesbian Pulp Novels**

The first modern paperbacks appeared in 1939 but did not proliferate until World War II, when the military distributed them to soldiers on the front as entertainment. These books, known as *pulps* because of the cheap paper used in their production, were designed to appeal to mainstream (as opposed to “literary”) readers, so they tended to focus on topics and use story lines that would enrapture a reader from the very first page. This meant that they were generally formulaic Westerns, detective fiction, romance, and ripped-from-the-headlines sensational texts that tended to reinforce ideas popularly held in the culture. Pulp novels had their heyday between 1950 and 1965, and they were sold on newsstands, as well as in drugstores and bus terminals, usually for about 25 cents. Their low price and pocket-sized format meant that most people considered them disposable in the same way that their predecessors, pulp magazines, had been. Scholar Yvonne Keller describes lesbian pulps as “typically lurid, voyeuristic and frequently homophobic, easily the opposite of ‘high literature.’ At the time, they were called ‘trashy,’ or ‘dirty books’; they are somewhat like the *National Enquirer* in book form” (“Ab/Normal” 177–178). Initially, lesbian pulps were written with a heterosexual male audience in mind, an audience that would find their contents titillating and would read them with a voyeuristic gaze. Hence, many of the early authors of lesbian-themed pulps were men.

The covers of lesbian pulp novels, as Jaye Zimet shows in *Strange Sisters: The Art of Lesbian Pulp Fiction, 1949–1969*, often featured illustrations of busty, scantily clad, traditionally beautiful, almost always white women, and most often there were two women on the cover—one kneeling or lying on the floor or a bed and the other standing above her or sitting nearby, either looking at the first woman or gazing out at the viewer/reader. With titles like *Women’s Barracks* (1950), *Female Convict* (1952), *Women in Prison* (1953), *Women without Men* (1957), and *Reformatory Girls* (1960), these books promised to reveal the sultry underside of environments where nontraditional women—soldiers, prisoners, and wayward
teens—lived together as emotional and sexual companions. Of the women portrayed on pulp covers, Ann Bannon says,

Who were these “girls”? Gazing at the pulp-art covers of lesbian fiction published half a century ago is like reconnecting with old acquaintances; I hesitate to call them friends, since I never really recognized them as such. In fact, over the years as my own books [the Beebo Brinker series] were published, I looked in astonishment at the choices the editors and art directors had made. The books arrived in brown packets, for the very good reason that they were deliberately evocative of shady sex. With only small adjustments, and sometimes none at all, the young women I was looking at could easily have walked off those pulp covers and onto the pages of Harper's Bazaar to sell the “New Look.” Many could have graced the ladies’ undies section of the Sears, Roebuck catalog just as they were. (qtd. in Zimet 9)

The covers of lesbian-themed pulps, then, were not the lesbians with whom most women—those who knew they knew lesbians, that is—were familiar, especially early on; these were the lesbians of heterosexual male fantasies.

Women’s Barracks, by Tereska Torres, was the book that started “the golden age of paperback originals” (Stryker 49). The novel is based at least partially on Torres’s experiences serving in Charles de Gaulle’s Free French army during World War II. Though Women’s Barracks deals openly with the sexual dalliances among the military women who are its characters, that is not its primary focus.

The book sold more than a million copies in 1950, and eventually, it gained such notoriety that it became the focus of obscenity trials in Canada and the United States. Noting that, after World War II, Canadian newsstands “were opened to a huge range of mass market publications from the United States,” Mary Louise Adams explains that Crown Attorney Raoul Mercier showed no interest in “the parts where heterosexual women find themselves pregnant, or where they discuss their plans to sleep with married men or where they attempt suicide. The definition of immorality was too narrow to include them. For Mercier, what made
this book obscene was its discussion of lesbianism” (111). The public uproar that provided the context for the *Women’s Barracks* trial had to do with a general sense in Canadian culture that obscene and sexually provocative material from the United States would corrupt Canadian youth. In 1952, *Women’s Barracks* was brought before a U.S. House of Representatives committee led by Congressman Ezekiel Candler Gathings; the committee “refused to quote it in their Report of the Select Committee into Current Pornographic Materials, claiming that its lesbian passages—which were restrained by contemporary standards—were too graphic to be included in a government document” (Stryker 51). According to Stryker, the report from the Gathings Committee resulted in publishers attempting to tone down the sexual content of their books and placing “greater emphasis on stories that drove home the generally tragic consequences of straying from the straight and narrow path” (51).

Some lesbians, most writing under pseudonyms, began to author lesbian-themed pulp novels specifically for a lesbian audience. Vin Packer, whose given name is Marijane Meaker and whose other pennames were Ann Aldrich and M. E. Kerr, wrote what was probably the first of these novels, *Spring Fire*. The novel is about Leda and Mitch, two sorority sisters who become involved in a dramatic, sexually charged romance marked by overwrought drama and betrayal. The story ends tragically with Leda lapsing into psychosis and Mitch clearly “scared straight” by the entire sordid affair.

Meaker is quick to point out that previous to the publication of *Spring Fire*, a lesbian market was not evident to anyone at Fawcett (the book’s publisher), which was merely spurred on to publish more lesbian-themed paperbacks by the economic success of *Women’s Barracks*:

[*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…. [I]t 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 that anyone was aware of the gay audience out there. (qtd. in “Was It Right” 390)
Stryker echoes Meaker’s characterization of the impact of *Spring Fire*, claiming that it “called attention to an enthusiastic lesbian readership whose extent had not been appreciated previously but one to which Fawcett and other mainstream paperback publishers would cater for the next fifteen years” (57). Perhaps for the first time, and clearly by accident, a lesbian market had emerged.

Roberta Yusba notes that “perhaps 40 or 50 lesbian novels were written by women and were also good enough to become underground classics. Dog-eared copies of books by Ann Bannon, Valerie Taylor, Artemis Smith, and Paula Christian were passed among friends in lesbian communities . . . and also reached isolated, small-town lesbians who could read them and see that they were not the only lesbians in the world” (qtd. in Nealon 748). Though the publishers still had ultimate control over the covers of the books, the stories between the covers tended to act as “tour guides” to places where lesbians seemed to congregate and interact with one another—places such as Greenwich Village, where much of Bannon’s Beebo Brinker series takes place.

They also functioned as what Joan Nestle has called *survival literature* in that they helped provide a sense of what romantic relationships between women might look like. In her anthology of excerpts from lesbian-themed pulp novels, Katherine V. Forrest explains that very little biographical information exists for the novelists who produced these books because many of “the pulp fiction lesbian writers were deeply closeted, and some have dissolved into the mists like Cheshire cats, leaving only their printed words behind” (xi).

Two authors who did not exactly dissolve into the mists were Patricia Highsmith (Mary Patricia Plangman) and Ann Bannon (Ann Weldy). Highsmith, writing as Claire Morgan, produced what many claim to be the first lesbian novel to end “happily”—that is, with the possibility that the two main characters, Therese and Carol, might enjoy an ongoing lesbian relationship with one another. *The Price of Salt* was not a paperback original, but it reached the height of its popularity after it appeared in paperback in 1952. Because it was published first by a mainstream publisher, Highsmith’s novel had less of...
the potboiler character of paperback originals and more of the complexity of mainstream literature. Although a popular novelist, Highsmith (author of *Strangers on a Train*, *The Talented Mr. Ripley*, and other books) did not acknowledge until 1984 that she was indeed the Claire Morgan who wrote *The Price of Salt*; the fact that it sold a million copies suggests that it may have met a need for a lesbian readership hungry for representation.

Ann Bannon’s *Beebo Brinker* novels were all published as paperback originals, and they tended to have fully developed, less stereotypical lesbian characters and plots as well as slightly more hopeful endings than many of the pulps. Bannon’s novels were rereleased in the 1980s and 1990s by well-known lesbian publishing house Naiad Press and in the 2000s by Cleis Press, and all of Highsmith’s novels have been rereleased by W. W. Norton. In 2015, queer-identified director Todd Haynes released *Carol*, his film version of *The Price of Salt*, starring Cate Blanchett as Carol and Rooney Mara as Therese.

Find Out More  "Pulp-like" short fiction about lesbians also appeared in the Daughters of Bilitis publication *The Ladder* in the 1950s. See, for example, Jo Allyn’s "The Eleventh Hour" in the readings at the end of this chapter.

**Gay Male Pulp Novels**

Like their lesbian-themed counterparts, which were much “more numerous and popular than those that dealt with male homosexuality,” gay male-themed pulps “represent, beneath a veneer of enticing exploitation, a compendium of the not-so-hidden preoccupations and fears of the tempestuous and socially unstable postwar years” (*Pulp Friction* 3). Michael Bronski notes, though, that the “trajectory for gay male pulps is very different [from that of lesbian-themed pulps]. There was no burgeoning market for gay male novels in the 1950s because they apparently had little crossover appeal for a substantial heterosexual readership” (*Pulp Friction* 4). Although some gay male-themed pulp novels were published as paperback originals, many were republications of earlier novels originally published in hardback by mainstream houses.
A few gay male books were written and published in hardback during the 1930s and republished in paperback format after World War II. For instance, André Tellier’s *Twilight Men* was originally published in 1931 and republished in paperback by Greenberg in 1948 and by Pyramid Books in 1957. Blair Niles, a woman best known at the time for the travel and nature writing she wrote collaboratively with her husband, wrote *Strange Brother*, also originally published in 1931, then republished in 1952. Forman Brown’s *Better Angel*, published in 1933, was republished in 1951 as *Torment* under the pseudonym Richard Meeker. Novels by mainstream authors such as Gore Vidal (*The City and the Pillar*, 1948) and Truman Capote (*Other Voices, Other Rooms*, 1948) received critical attention and notoriety because of their gay male content—explicit in the case of Vidal and implicit in the case of Capote.

We should not assume, however, that Vidal’s fame and connections granted his gay-themed novel immunity from homophobia in the publishing business. *The City and the Pillar* “so unnerved *The New York Times* it refused even to print the publisher’s ads” (Young). This rejection was surely a factor in how Vidal composed the original ending of his novel. The first edition of *The City and the Pillar* ends with the main character, Jim, murdering Bob, the childhood friend with whom he has been in love ever since their sexual encounters in the woods when both were teens. The murder occurs in the context of Jim’s realization of Bob’s homophobia. The 1965 version of *The City and the Pillar* was revised by Vidal and ends with Jim raping rather than murdering Bob, ostensibly because Vidal no longer needed to conform to publisher mandates that the book end in the death of one of the main characters. Capote’s *Other Voices, Other Rooms* focuses on Joel Knox, who is sent to live in a rural Alabama mansion with his estranged father and a cast of other characters, including Randolph, who is a transvestite. Near the end of the novel, the reader is led to believe that Randolph is also the character described by Joel earlier as the “queer lady” who appears in one of the mansion’s windows. *Other Voices, Other Rooms* did not enjoy great critical success because reviewers saw it as contrived and lacking in narrative structure. However, the implicit homosexual themes in the novel, combined with the provocative jacket photo—Capote lounging on a sofa and giving the camera a come-hither look—caused a controversy that helped make Capote a
literary star. Vidal’s novel was republished in paperback in 1950 and Capote’s in 1949, making theirs among the first gay-themed novels to appear in paperback format.

Like *The City and the Pillar* and *Other Voices, Other Rooms*, James Baldwin’s *Giovanni’s Room* (1956) [\textit{Chapter 9}] appeared in paperback after experiencing little success in its initial hardback printing. *Giovanni’s Room* is a book Michael Bronski characterizes as among those gay “self-hating novels . . . which end in either murder or self-destruction” (“Queer Eye”). As a Signet pulp, however, featuring a sexy Giovanni on the cover and a pseudo-journalistic subscript (“A daring novel that treats a controversial subject with honesty and compassion”), *Giovanni’s Room* sold much better than before—signaling, perhaps, a growing mainstream interest in frank treatments of homosexual lives.

We should also note that some of the women writing lesbian pulps were writing books with gay male themes. Vin Packer (Marijane Meaker), for example, published *Whisper His Sin* in 1954. Stryker says of this novel,

Prior to the mid-1960s there were simply no mass-market books that dealt with male-male desire that did not somehow couch it in terms of bisexual conflict, illustrate it with misleading cover art containing both men and women, or hide it behind pathologizing marketing blurbs. This was certainly the case with *Whisper His Sin* . . . which did a little of all three. (107)

Transgender Novels

At mid-century, North American and Western European ideas about the nature of homosexuality—which deeply affected the packaging of pulp novels—still reflected the influence of the German sexologists’ ideas about gender inversion [\textit{Chapter 2}]. As a result, post–World War II pulp novels often portrayed lesbians and gay men as possessing the qualities commonly associated with the “opposite sex.” What’s more, U.S. popular media and culture, profoundly affected by advances in technology, were asking ethical questions often associated with technological progress—how far is too far for science to go in altering nature? What is the relationship between science and nature? In previous generations,
these questions had manifested themselves in fascination with the human potential to create monsters in the name of science—as in, for instance, Mary Shelley’s *Frankenstein*. In 1952, this type of fascination focused on transsexuality when the news broke that Christine Jorgensen, formerly George, had received successful sex reassignment surgery in Denmark. According to Stryker, though Jorgensen’s autobiography (with an introduction by Harry Benjamin) [A Chapter 5] would not be published until 1967, the “journalism trade publication *Editor and Publisher* announced in the spring of 1954 that more newsprint had been generated about Jorgensen during the previous year than about any other individual—over a million and a half words” (73).

As is evidenced in the work of B-movie director Edward D. Wood Jr. (featured in the 1994 bio-pic *Ed Wood* by Tim Burton), in 1950s U.S. popular culture, almost no distinction was made among transvestitism, transsexuality, and intersexuality. Capitalizing on the Jorgensen media frenzy, Wood directed *Glen or Glenda* based on Jorgensen’s sex change operation. Humorously dubbed the “Worst Director of All Time,” Wood supplemented his income as a producer by writing pulp novels, most of which contained transvestite characters or focused exclusively on transvestitism. Among the titles are *Black Lace Drag* (1963), featuring a transvestite hit man named Glen and his drag persona, Glenda, and its sequel, *Death of a Transvestite* (1967). Wood’s quickly composed, sensationalist work—both in film and in print—has gained such a following in recent years that there is currently an Internet religion called The Church of Ed Wood, which boasts a membership of more than 3,000.

Stryker points out that some “novels written in the late 1940s, well before the Jorgensen media blitz, suggest that transgender issues were actually quite central to postwar American anxieties about sexuality, and to the paperback phenomenon itself” (77). One example of how these anxieties were expressed is Stuart Engstrand’s *The Sling and the Arrow*. Engstrand’s sensational novel is about a man who not only cross-dresses but asks his wife to do the same; he eventually becomes psychotic, imagines that he has transformed into a woman, kills his wife, and “drives off into the night where he takes his place near the head of a long line of gender-bent pop culture killers” (Stryker 78).

Lesbian pulp novels were seen for at least a decade following the advent of feminism as having very little positive to say to women wishing to build identities not constricted by stereotypes and sexist constructions of gender. However, queer pulps and, more recently, pulp cover art have reemerged as popular artifacts. The current use of pulp covers as refrigerator magnets, postcards, and T-shirt transfers celebrates campy images that recall, if not a more difficult time, at least a more closeted time. The celebration of pulp reveals a sense of connection to a past today’s LGBTQ people both eschew and embrace. Many critics focus on the
unhappy endings and bizarre characterizations in these books, but Katherine Forrest proclaims, “Their words reached us, they touched us in different and deeply personal ways, and they helped us all” (xix). Though it is clear that most pulp texts were meant to teach readers that queers were . . . well, queer, and therefore doomed to difficult lives filled with sleaze and shame, our predecessors found in them important connections to one another.

Emerging Queer Literary Voices

A clearly discernible, public, and even somewhat queer transgressive aesthetic in American culture became apparent in the writings of those who identified with Beat culture in the 1950s. Authors such as Jack Kerouac, Gregory Corso, and Diane DiPrima urged their readers, through a variety of experimental forms and free-form genres, to question what they saw as an emerging culture dominated by consumerism, political complacency, and repressive norms, particularly around sex and sexuality. This work would eventually contribute to revolutionary youth cultures of the 1960s, particularly the so-called sexual revolution. A founding figure of the Beat movement and a lifelong proponent of sexual freedom was the gay poet Allen Ginsberg (1926–1997), whose work understood democracy as enabling a variety of expressions of intimate freedom. In one of his most famous poems, “Howl” (written in 1955), Ginsberg laments the devastation wreaked on creative youth by a cramped, uptight, repressive society:

I saw the best minds of my generation destroyed by madness, starving hysterical naked,
dragging themselves through the negro streets at dawn looking for an angry fix,
angelheaded hipsters burning for the ancient heavenly connection to the starry dynamo in the machinery of night . . .

A bit later in the poem, Ginsberg speaks frankly of homosexuals as victims of a sexually repressive consumerist society, of those

who let themselves be fucked in the ass by saintly motorcyclists, and screamed with joy,
who blew and were blown by those human seraphim, the sailors, caresses of Atlantic and Caribbean love . . .

who lost their loveboys to the three old shrews of fate the one eyed shrew of the heterosexual dollar the one eyed shrew that winks out of the womb and the one
eyed shrew that does nothing but sit on her ass and snip the intellectual golden threads of the craftsman’s loom . . . (23)

“Howl” was so inflammatory that shortly after its publication, the poem was the subject of a censorship trial. Fellow poet and publisher Lawrence Ferlinghetti, who published “Howl” as part of his City Lights series, noted that “[t]he ‘Howl’ that was heard around the world wasn’t seized in San Francisco in 1956 just because it was judged obscene by cops, but because it attacked the bare roots of our dominant culture, the very Moloch heart of our consumer society” (qtd. in Ginsberg, xi). Ginsberg’s transgression lay not only in depicting homosexuality but also in linking the repression of queerness and other forms of alternative, nonnormative behavior to the desires of a consumerist culture intent on squelching transgressive creativity and enforcing conformity.

Dorothy Allison (b. 1949), award-winning author of the novel Bastard out of Carolina, has written provocatively about the importance of recognizing and honoring our sexual desires, particularly for lesbians. In her collection of essays, Skin, she writes about pornography, a touchy subject among those feminists who see porn as degrading to women. Allison maintains a sex-positive approach, arguing that

the word queer means much more than lesbian. Since I first used it in 1980 I have always meant it to imply that I am not only a lesbian but a transgressive lesbian—femme, masochistic, as sexually aggressive as the women I seek out and as pornographic in my imagination and sexual activities as the heterosexual hegemony has ever believed. (23)

Patrick Califia, writing as a sex-positive lesbian long before transitioning, wrote about recognizing the divergent sexual tastes of queer communities. Califia’s erotic fiction often transgressed self-imposed norms of sexual behavior among gays and lesbians, particularly as it depicted intense sadomasochistic sex acts and bisexual intimacy. In the essays in Public Sex: The Culture of Radical Sex, Califia challenged conceptions of the place, role, and variety of sexuality within queer cultures. In “A Secret Side of Lesbian Sexuality” (1979), Califia argued that “[t]he sexual closet is bigger than you think” (157) and announced, “I identify more strongly as a sadomasochist than as a lesbian. I hang out in the gay community because that’s where the sexual fringe starts to unravel” (158). What Califia most appreciates about “gay community” is that it can be a space in which boundaries of normative sex and sexuality are transgressed.

One artist whose work challenges what he sees as a prudishness lurking within some parts of the larger LGBTQ community is Dennis Cooper (b. 1953). A stylistic maverick, Cooper works in many forms, including the novel, poetry, and
journalism. The content of his work, though, has disturbed a variety of audiences, queer and nonqueer alike. Cooper’s themes and plots focus on homoerotic sadomasochism, and some elements of his work are reminiscent of snuff porn, in which people are killed for the erotic pleasure of others. Noted gay novelist Edmund White calls Cooper’s writing “obsessive” and “far from ordinary morality;” he “meditates ceaselessly on violence and perversion [and seems] dedicated to drugs, kink, and a fragile sense of beauty fashioned out of the detritus of American suburbs” (282). One of Cooper’s most famous novels is *Frisk*, the second book in a five-novel sequence depicting the underlife of young men engaging in a variety of sexual practices, taking drugs, and sometimes hustling their bodies to make money for food or the next quick fix. These young people are often used and abused by older men who pay them to perform sexual services. In this sense, the books are reminiscent of the works of earlier authors such as John Rechy, whose 1963 novel, *The City of Night*, sympathetically chronicled the lives of street hustlers servicing men.

But Cooper’s aim in writing is not just to chronicle a queer underlife; it is rather to explore the erotic imagination at its most transgressive and boundary pushing. *Frisk* (1991), for instance, is a bizarre coming-of-age story, tracing the sexual development of one young man, ironically named Dennis, and his interest in sexual torture and snuff. In one passage, Dennis reflects on his desires:

> It wasn’t that I didn’t fantasize murdering hustlers. It’s just that I tend to be too scared or shy the first few times I sleep with someone to do what I actually want. The worst that could, and did, happen was I’d get a little too rough. But the hustler would stop me, or I’d stop myself, before things became more than conventionally kinky, as far as he knew. (36)

During a trip to Holland, Dennis begins sending letters to his friends back home that describe sexual exploits in which he becomes more than a “little rough” and actually murders his tricks. For Dennis, such sexual murder is driven by his desire to know, to possess, the objects of his attraction; meditating on the contradiction between loving and killing, he tells a friend of his,

> I can actually imagine myself inside the skins I admire. I’m pretty sure if I tore some guy open I’d know him as well as anyone could, because I’d have what he consists of right there in my hands, mouth, wherever. . . . I want to know everything about you. But to really do that, I’d have to kill you, as bizarre as that sounds.” (51, 67)

Novels such as *Frisk*, like most of Cooper’s work, have been decried by numerous gay activists who see artists like Cooper as validating a homophobic society’s belief that queers are predatory, sick, and sinful. At the very least, such activists maintain, presenting a seedy underside of gay life makes it more difficult for
LGBTQ people to assimilate into the dominant culture and to claim that queer people are, essentially, just like everyone else. But Cooper's goals in novels such as *Frisk* are precisely to trouble the desire to fit in, the desire to be normal. At the end of the book, we learn that Dennis has not in fact killed anyone; we've just been reading, like the friends who received his letters, about fantasies that he has no intention of fulfilling. Cooper draws our attention to how most people have fantasies that they will not enact and how the content of our imaginations is often far from normative. As he puts it in an interview, *Frisk*

is about the difference between what is possible in one's fantasy life, and what is possible in one's real life. . . . It tries, in various ways, to seduce the readers into believing a series of murders are real, then announces itself as a fiction, hopefully leaving readers responsible for whatever pleasure they took in believing the murders were real. . . . Murder is only erotic in the imagination, if at all. (Reitz)

*Frisk*, then, points out that the transgressive lies, often latently, behind almost any façade of normalcy and that ignoring it is to ignore part of what makes us complex and interesting. Cooper also insinuates that transgressive and normalizing impulses coexist uneasily and that any ethical life will have to acknowledge their interrelationship and negotiate carefully between them. Novelists such as Cooper show us that the transgressive lies not just at the fringes of the mainstream; it is often at its center, critiquing the normative lives many of us build for ourselves.

We have outlined how different queer writers have used the transgressive to question the values, norms, and assumptions of both dominant cultures and LGBTQ communities. At this point, though, we must ask, what are the limits of transgression as a form of political agency? More broadly, to what political use can transgression be put, and is it a politically efficacious strategy? Certainly, artists such as Cooper, as well as other gay writers such as Bret Easton Ellis (*Less Than Zero* [1985] and *American Psycho* [1991]) and Jeanette Winterson (*Oranges Are Not the Only Fruit* [1985] and *Written on the Body* [1992]) challenge us with difficult topics, inviting us to identify with transgression and transgressive acts. In the process, these writers question our assumptions about what is normal and, through our periodic identifications with nonnormative characters, provoke us to reconsider our tendencies to prejudge. At the same time, there are limits. Winterson, at the end of her novel *Art and Lies*, depicts the relationship between a priest and a young boy whom the priest has gelded so that he can be a *castrato*, remaining boy-like and retaining his high-pitched singing voice. While Winterson's writing is often moving, to what extent can we identify with the priest? Moreover, do we *want* to identify with such characters? What are our limits in questioning and stretching our own values? Recent work, such as *A Little Life* (2015) by the Hawaiian-American author Hanya Yanagihara, continues to prompt such questions in its lurid
depiction of childhood sexual abuse, domestic abuse in a male couple, and the complexities of adult same-sex intimacies among a group of lifelong friends. Openly gay literary critic Daniel Mendelsohn has lambasted the “unending parade of aesthetically gratuitous scenes of punitive and humiliating violence,” particularly as they often go on and on in this 800-plus page novel. Complicating matters, Yanagihara is presumably a heterosexual author, which further “queers” our understanding of who is authorized—or can claim authority—to depict queerness.

Queering Books for Young People

While much of the literature we have discussed has been written specifically for consumption by adults, we can also trace the rise in the late 20th century of books with discernible queer content for younger readers. In the wake of the sexual revolution of the late 1960s, some authors writing primarily for adolescents began experimenting with gay and lesbian content, such as John Donovan in *I’ll Get There. It Better Be Worth the Trip* (1969) and Nancy Garden in *Annie on My Mind* (1982). Such books were often careful and cautionary. The boys in Donovan’s book exchange one chaste, nearly accidental kiss, and the girls in Garden’s novel are given a shocking wake-up call when a favorite lesbian teacher is fired from her job.

The problems arise around books aimed at elementary school-aged children. Diana Schemo writes, “According to a 2004 national poll by the Kaiser Family Foundation, Harvard University’s Kennedy School of Government and National Public Radio, roughly three out of four parents say it is appropriate for high schools to teach about homosexuality, but about half say it is appropriate in middle school.” Only tiny percentages approve of introducing LGBTQ subject matter to younger children. Lesbian author Lesléa Newman knows of no attempt to censor her young adult or adult writing, but her children’s book, *Heather Has Two Mommies* (1989), has had quite a different history. When New York adopted the multicultural curriculum guide “Children of the Rainbow” in 1992, *Heather Has Two Mommies*, along with Michael Willhoite’s *Daddy’s Roommate* (1991), became flashpoints for angry discussions about making books with homosexual themes available in schools. New York City School Chancellor Joseph Fernandez suspended the school board of District 24, which had refused to endorse the new curriculum for fear of “promot[ing] a homosexual lifestyle” (Duberman 589). Eventually, Fernandez was forced out as chancellor over the controversy.

Even today, *Heather Has Two Mommies* and *Daddy’s Roommate* regularly appear on lists of banned books; see, for instance, Wikipedia’s “List of Most Commonly Challenged Books in the U.S.” or Herbert Foerstel’s *Banned in the USA: A Reference Guide to Book Censorship in Schools*. *Heather* and *Roommate* have come to stand in
for claims that “gay agenda” advocates seek to corrupt children. Conservative organizations position themselves as protectors of the innocent, using Newman’s and Willhoite’s books as examples of the corrupting influence of homosexuality. For instance, Peter LaBarbera’s articles, “How to Protect Your Children from Pro-homosexuality Propaganda in Schools” and “When Silence Would Have Been Golden,” cast curricula that promote tolerance or diversity as dangerously pro-gay, even as “brainwashing kindergartners.” Antigay demonizing of Heather Has Two Mommies and Daddy’s Roommate, as well as of books such as King & King (2002), Antonio’s Card (2005), and Jacob’s New Dress (2014) seeks to initiate a moral panic, which can in turn invest received moral authorities with the responsibility—and, more to the point, with the power—to protect innocent, less powerful people from ideas they do not like.

Despite such backlash, the move into the 21st century has seen a dramatic increase in the publication of children’s books and young adult (YA) fiction with openly queer content. Capitalizing on the phenomenal success of the Harry Potter books among young readers, publishers have readily identified lesbian and gay teens as a potential market. A groundbreaking book in this regard is David Levithan’s Boy Meets Boy (2003), which pushes boundaries by imagining a high school in which teachers and students are fully supportive of a range of queer identities, including the bigger-than-life drag queen football quarterback, Infinite Darlene. Laura Goode’s Sister Mischief (2011) offers readers a look into the lives of a Minnesota hip-hop group led by a lesbian, and Benjamin Alire Sáenz’s Aristotle and Dante Discover the Secrets of the Universe (2012) is a moving story of two high school friends who discover they are in love.

Queer Literature: Global Disruptions

Given that gay identity is largely a construct of American and European civilization, the treatment of the homoerotic outside the West and the Global North reveals tensions and issues surrounding sex and sexuality that are particular to their contexts. At times, we may note some similarities between Western and non-Western understandings of queerness. Japanese ultraditionalist author Yukio Mishima (1925–1970), for example, staked out new territory with his 1948 Bildungsroman Confessions of a Mask, which is assumed to be at least semiautobiographical. We might compare this book with American Rita Mae Brown’s (b. 1944) Rubyfruit Jungle (1973) or with Sri Lankan Shyam Selvadurai’s (b. 1965) Funny Boy (1994); all three novels offer unapologetic, reality-based accounts of young people recognizing their homo- or bisexuality, coming out, and growing into adulthood. Still, their cultural specificity must be noted. Mishima’s and Selvadurai’s
protagonists face cultural and familial pressures that may seem similar to those of comparable gay characters in the West but are not necessarily equivalent. Mishima’s Japanese characters, for instance, face cultural pressures not just to conform to certain gendered and sexual roles but to rebuild a country that has lost a world war. The account of the closet in *Confessions of a Mask* is nuanced not just by family politics but by national politics at a time when Japan’s international reputation had been devastated by military defeat; in this context, homosexuals seemed not only like sexual deviants but national deviants by not engaging in the kinds of relationships that would help restore and repopulate the country.

Although some Latin countries tolerate fairly open expressions of homosexuality, many do not. Hostile cultural environments have produced three characteristic types of LGBTQ literature in the Latin world. One response to such hostility is a highly coded literature; the Spanish Majorcan author Carme Riera (b. 1948), for instance, uses a prison cell to symbolize the closeted lesbian life in her story *I Leave You the Sea* (1975). A second type of Latin LGBTQ literature reflects the forced exile of many gay men to more accepting locations. Here we think of gay Uncle Sergio in Puerto Rican Magali García Ramis’s (b. 1946) novel *Felices Días, Tío Sergio* (*Happy Days, Uncle Sergio*, 1986) or Eduardo in Brazilian Silviano Santiago’s (b. 1936) *Stella Manhattan* (1994). Perhaps most notably, Cuban author Reinaldo Arenas (1943–1990) recounts in his memoir *Before Night Falls* the widespread oppression of homosexuals in Castro’s Cuba and the author’s eventual immigration to the United States as a refugee. In Arenas’s account of communist Cuba, homosexuality is cast as a Western decadence, a self-indulgence contrary to the spirit of working collectively to build a strong nation. Finally, some Latin authors have chosen an intersectional approach, burying LGBTQ plotlines within discussions of social or political struggles. Sara Levi Calderón (b. 1942), for example, writes about a lesbian relationship between two Jewish women in Mexico in her 1990 novel *Dos Mujeres* (*Two Women*). This book, set in the context of the North American Free Trade Agreement (NAFTA) and Mexico’s efforts to become a “first-world” nation, raises issues of *diaspora*—Jewish and lesbian. Chilean author Pedro Lemebel (b. about 1955) uses the 1986 anti-Pinochet tensions in Santiago to contextualize the gay relationship in his novel *Tengo Miedo Torero* (*My Tender Matador*, 2001). And Antonio José Ponté’s (b. 1964) *Contrabando de Sombras* (*Smuggled Shadows*, 2002) envisions the Spanish Inquisition and the Cuban Revolution as parallel events that encouraged the persecution of homosexual men.

In South Africa, a mostly white LGBTQ community has developed a visible subculture on the Euro-American model. But elsewhere in sub-Saharan Africa, LGBTQ literature was, until quite recently, almost unknown. Works such as Nigerian Wole Soyinka’s (b. 1934) novel *The Interpreters* (1965) and Senegalese Mariama Bâ’s (1929–1981) *Scarlet Song* (1981) mention same-sex love but only
negatively and among minor characters. A notable exception to LGBTQ invisibility in African literature is *No Past, No Present, No Future* (1973) by Sierra Leonean Yulisa Amadu Maddy (b. 1936). In this novel, one of the three main characters is a gay man who leaves Africa for Europe; this is a case of racial and homosexual expatriation that recalls James Baldwin’s work, discussed earlier in this chapter. Ghanaian Ama Ata Aidoo’s (b. 1942) *Our Sister Killjoy* (1977) and Senegalese Ken Bugul’s *Le Baobab Fou* (*The Crazy Baobab Tree*, 1984) ushered in a more open discussion of LGBTQ issues. Recent novels such as Cameroonian Frieda Ekotto’s (b. 1959) *Chuchote Pas Trop* (*Not Too Sissy*, 2001), Nigerian Chimamanda Ngozi Adichie’s (b. 1977) *Americanah* (2013), and Nigerian Chinelo Okparanta’s *Under the Udala Trees* (2015) demonstrate a wider presence of LGBTQ people in sub-Saharan African literatures. Critics use Martinican critic Édouard Glissant’s term “opacity” to elucidate these and other works. Representing the opposite of the idea of transparency, opacity evokes important aspects of resistance inherent in Otherness by “celebrating the ambiguity of gender roles and sexual configurations in African cultures” (Migraine-George 5). In some ways opacity resembles the practice of “coding” LGBTQ material that was common among early 20th-century writers such as Djuna Barnes, Virginia Woolf, and others.

Questions For Discussion

1. In her 1998 book *Stagestruck*, Sarah Schulman describes recognizing plot and characters from her novel *People in Trouble* (1987) in the smash Broadway hit *Rent*. More than the issue of plagiarism, Schulman raises other questions: “How is AIDS going to be represented in this society? What is the result of the cultural appropriation of gay and lesbian work? What happens when an individual artist is dominated by a corporate product?” (2). Read *People in Trouble* and see *Rent* (film version 2005). How might you answer Schulman’s questions?

2. In this chapter, we identified Whitman as a poet who has descendants—that is, writers coming after him who were influenced by his work enough either to imitate him, such as Edward Carpenter and Allen Ginsberg, or to expand on issues, such as race and gender, that he didn’t explore in great depth, like Langston Hughes and Audre Lorde. Consider why it has been important for some LGBTQ artists to engage previous artists—aesthetically, culturally, and politically. What do they gain by doing so? What do their readers or viewers gain? How might such conversations among artists across time create a sense of tradition, and how can such a sense be important for LGBTQ people? At the same time, keep in mind the risk of presentism we have discussed at earlier points in this book. What are the dangers in contemporary LGBTQ artists claiming past artists as queer?

3. This chapter offered you a broad overview of homosed literature, and inevitably, we had to leave out discussion of much worthy and important work. Several online
resources readily provide useful introductions to queer literature. Locate one, perhaps starting with a search on Google, glbtq.com, or Wikipedia, and find a writer whom we have not covered in this chapter. Investigate his, her, or hir life and art, paying particular attention to the social and historical contexts in which that person worked. Write a proposal in which you explain why the writer you have researched should be included in a new edition of this book.

References and Further Reading


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Recollections. 2 vols., Houghton Mifflin, 1903.


Walt Whitman
(1819–1892), United States

“We Two Boys Together Clinging”
We two boys together clinging,
One the other never leaving,
Up and down the roads going—North and South excursions making,
Power enjoying—elbows stretching—fingers clutching,
Arm’d and fearless—eating, drinking, sleeping, loving,
No law less than ourselves owning—sailing, soldiering, thieving, threatening,
Misers, menials, priests alarming—air breathing, water drinking, on the turf or the sea-beach dancing,
Cities wrenching, ease scorning, statutes mocking, feebleness chasing,
Fulfilling our foray.

Walt Whitman. From Leaves of Grass.

Michael Field
(Katherine Bradley, 1848–1914 and Edith Cooper, 1862–1913), Great Britain

“Sometimes I Do Despatch My Heart”
Sometimes I do despatch my heart
Among the graves to dwell apart:
On some the tablets are erased,
Some earthquake-tumbled, some defaced,
And some that have forgotten lain
A fall of tears makes green again;
And my brave heart can overtread
Her brood of hopes, her infant dead,
And pass with quickened footsteps by
The headstone of hoar memory,
Till she hath found
One swelling mound
With just her name writ and beloved,
From that she cannot be removed.

“It Was Deep April”
It was deep April, and the morn
Shakespere was born;
The world was on us, pressing sore;
My love and I took hands and swore,
Against the world, to be
Poets and lovers evermore,
To laugh and dream on Lethe’s shore,
To sing to Charon in his boat,
Heartening the timid souls afloat;
Of judgement never to take heed,
But to those fast-locked souls to speed,
Who never from Apollo fled,
Who spent no hour among the dead;
Continually
With them to dwell,
Indifferent to heaven and hell.

Michael Field. Penname for Katherine Bradley and Edith Cooper.

Edward Carpenter
(1844–1929), Great Britain

“Love’s Vision”
At night in each other’s arms,
Content, overjoyed, resting deep deep down in the darkness,
Lo! the heavens opened and He appeared—
Whom no mortal eye may see,
Whom no eye clouded with Care,
Whom none who seeks after this or that, whom none who has not escaped from self,
There—in the region of Equality, in the world of Freedom no longer limited,
Standing as a lofty peak in heaven above the clouds,
From below hidden, yet to all who pass into that region most clearly visible—
He the Eternal appeared.


Langston Hughes
(1902–1967), United States

“I, Too, Sing America”

I, too, sing America.
I am the darker brother.
They send me to eat in the kitchen
When company comes,
But I laugh,
And eat well,
And grow strong.

Tomorrow,
I’ll be at the table
When company comes.
Nobody’ll dare
Say to me,
“Eat in the kitchen,”
Then.
Besides,
They’ll see how beautiful I am
And be ashamed—

I, too, am America.

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Judy Grahn  
(1940– ), United States

“A History of Lesbianism”

How they came into the world,  
the women-loving-women  
came in three by three  
and four by four  
the women-loving-women  
came in ten by ten  
and ten by ten again  
until there were more  
than you could count  

they took care of each other  
the best they knew how  
and of each other’s children,  
if they had any.  

How they lived in the world,  
the women-loving-women  
learned as much as they were allowed  
and walked and wore their clothes  
the way they liked  
whenever they could. They did whatever  
they knew to be happy or free  
and worked and worked and worked.  

The women-loving-women  
in America were called dykes  
and some liked it  
and some did not.  

they made love to each other  
the best they knew how  
and for the best reasons  

How they went out of the world,  
the women-loving-women
went out one by one
having withstood greater and lesser
trials, and much hatred
from other people, they went out
one by one, each having tried
in her own way to overthrow
the rule of men over women,
they tried it one by one
and hundred by hundred,
until each came in her own way
to the end of her life
and died:

The subject of lesbianism
is very ordinary; it’s the question
of male domination that makes everybody
angry.

“A History of Lesbianism” from The Work of a Common Woman by Judy Grahn.

➢ June Jordan
(1936–2002), United States

“Poem about My Rights”
Even tonight and I need to take a walk and clear
my head about this poem about why I can’t
go out without changing my clothes my shoes
my body posture my gender identity my age
my status as a woman alone in the evening/
alone on the streets/alone not being the point/
the point being that I can’t do what I want
to do with my own body because I am the wrong
sex the wrong age the wrong skin and
suppose it was not here in the city but down on the beach/
or far into the woods and I wanted to go
there by myself thinking about God/or thinking
about children or thinking about the world/all of it
disclosed by the stars and the silence:
I could not go and I could not think and I could not
stay there
alone
as I need to be
alone because I can’t do what I want to do with my own
body and
who in the hell set things up
like this
and in France they say if the guy penetrates
but does not ejaculate then he did not rape me
and if after stabbing him if after screams if
after begging the bastard and if even after smashing
a hammer to his head if even after that if he
and his buddies fuck me after that
then I consented and there was
no rape because finally you understand finally
they fucked me over because I was wrong I was
wrong again to be me being me where I was/wrong
to be who I am
which is exactly like South Africa
penetrating into Namibia penetrating into
Angola and does that mean I mean how do you know if
Pretoria ejaculates what will the evidence look like the
proof of the monster jackboot ejaculation on Blackland
and if
after Namibia and if after Angola and if after Zimbabwe
and if after all of my kinsmen and women resist even to
self-immolation of the villages and if after that
we lose nevertheless what will the big boys say will they
claim my consent:

Do You Follow Me: We are the wrong people of
the wrong skin on the wrong continent and what
in the hell is everybody being reasonable about
and according to the *Times* this week
back in 1966 the C.I.A. decided that they had this problem and the problem was a man named Nkrumah so they killed him and before that it was Patrice Lumumba and before that it was my father on the campus of my Ivy League school and my father afraid to walk into the cafeteria because he said he was wrong the wrong age the wrong skin the wrong gender identity and he was paying my tuition and before that it was my father saying I was wrong saying that I should have been a boy because he wanted one/a boy and that I should have been lighter skinned and that I should have had straighter hair and that I should not be so boy crazy but instead I should just be one/a boy and before that it was my mother pleading plastic surgery for my nose and braces for my teeth and telling me to let the books loose to let them loose in other words I am very familiar with the problems of the C.I.A. and the problems of South Africa and the problems of Exxon Corporation and the problems of white America in general and the problems of the teachers and the preachers and the F.B.I. and the social workers and my particular Mom and Dad/I am very familiar with the problems because the problems turn out to be me I am the history of rape I am the history of the rejection of who I am I am the history of the terrorized incarceration of Myself I am the history of battery assault and limitless armies against whatever I want to do with my mind
and my body and my soul and
whether it’s about walking out at night
or whether it’s about the love that I feel or
whether it’s about the sanctity of my vagina or
the sanctity of my national boundaries
or the sanctity of my leaders or the sanctity
of each and every desire
that I know from my personal and idiosyncratic
and indisputably single and singular heart
I have been raped
be-
cause I have been wrong the wrong sex the wrong age
the wrong skin the wrong nose the wrong hair the
wrong need the wrong dream the wrong geographic
the wrong sartorial I
I have been the meaning of rape
I have been the problem everyone seeks to
eliminate by forced
penetration with or without the evidence of slime and/
but let this be unmistakable this poem
is not consent I do not consent
to my mother to my father to the teachers to
the F.B.I. to South Africa to Bedford-Stuy
to Park Avenue to American Airlines to the hardon
idlers on the corners to the sneaky creeps in
cars
I am not wrong: Wrong is not my name
My name is my own my own my own
and I can’t tell you who the hell set things up like this
but I can tell you that from now on my resistance
my simple and daily and nightly self-determination
may very well cost you your life

Audre Lorde
(1934–1992), United States

“A Woman Speaks”

Moon marked and touched by sun
my magic is unwritten
but when the sea turns back
it will leave my shape behind.
I seek no favor
untouched by blood
unrelenting as the curse of love
permanent as my errors
or my pride
I do not mix
love with pity
nor hate with scorn
and if you would know me
look into the entrails of Uranus
where the restless oceans pound.
I do not dwell within my
birth nor my divinities
who am ageless and half-grown
and still seeking
my sisters
witches in Dahomey
wear me inside their coiled cloths
as our mother did
mourning.
I have been woman
for a long time
beware my smile
I am treacherous with old magic
and the noon’s new fury
with all your wide futures
promised
I am
woman
and not white.


Jo Allyn
(1957), United States

“The Eleventh Hour”
Hazel leaned against the wall and felt again for the letter in her pocket. The counter was clean and empty; there were only occasional customers this time of the afternoon in the little coffee shop. She brushed short, blonde hair back; it was hot and she was weary after the noon rush.

For the tenth time she pulled the letter from her uniform pocket and read it.

“Wednesday will be our first anniversary,” it said, “You know I want you to be with me. Navy life isn’t the best thing for marriage, not with me gone as much as I’ve been lately. But the ship will be tied up in San Diego for ten days and we can spend that time together if you’ll come down. I know I haven’t been a very good husband, Hazel, but give me this chance to make it up to you. Love, Jim.”

Another chance. . . . she sighed. How like Jim. Always wanting another chance to make up for the bad times, the loneliness, the indifference and neglect, the quarrels.

Heaven knew she had given him enough chances. She’d also stayed here in the little college town working, as he wanted her to, instead of following when the ship went to the East Coast last winter.

“Your family is here,” he had argued when she suggested going with him. “Besides you’ve got a good job here. You might not find another one back there that pays as well.”

Money meant a lot to Jim. Her wages kept the car payments up, among other things. Jim liked driving the late-model convertible he’d bought in New York, and he liked having plenty of “green stuff” to spend drinking with his sea-going buddies.

On the other hand, settling down to marriage didn’t appear to mean so much. There were problems of adjustment that, after a year of being too seldom together, still remained unsolved. And when they were together, his rough demands and careless neglect left her nervous and unhappy.

She sighed. Still, ten days vacation from the daily eight hours of catering to the crotchety hotel-coffee shop guests would be a relief. Maybe she could get rested up if Jim didn’t insist on his usual nightly round of skid-row bars.

There was another reason she wanted to see him. Something had been bothering her lately. Perhaps if she was with him again, the growing friendship between herself
and Patricia Blaine would fall into a reasonable, explainable perspective. Perhaps she should stay in San Diego, not see her any more.

It had begun the day her boss's daughter returned from Europe where she'd been bicycling across country on a youth-hostel tour. The big, pleasant looking girl with dark, closely cropped hair was enrolling in a post-graduate course at the college. She had enthusiastically detailed her plans to Hazel over a cup of coffee the first day she was back.

"It's wonderful having someone who is interested in these things to talk to," she said. "Most of the kids I know who graduated last year are gone, or," her brow wrinkled a little, "or married. The ones this year seem so darn young." She looked at Hazel's fair hair and level grey eyes with appreciation. "I hope you don't mind my taking up your time this way," she apologized belatedly.

"Not at all," Hazel reassured her quickly. "It gets pretty lonesome in here between two and five." Pat's loneliness was very appealing to Hazel who certainly understood it much more than the other girl was aware. The older girl's brown eyes were sad and wistful and trusting, all mixed together with something else... the shy admiration and devotion that Hazel recognized. She knew that Pat's mother was dead and that her father was much too busy to bother about being a companion to his only child. Money spent on her education and in travel was his substitute for parental love. Hazel knew it wasn't enough, and wondered if Pat was aware that she, too, was searching for acceptance... for a niche in someone's heart...

She wondered, too, what Pat would think if she told her of Tommy. Thomasina, the girl whose devotion had filled all the days of Hazel's young childhood. Tommy, the two years older tomboy whose quiet strength had protected Hazel from teasing boys and spiteful girls. Tommy who was always her sympathetic confidant and helpful friend. And finally when they were in their teens, whose attachment had seemed naturally, of its own accord to ripen into and demand the fulfillment of love.

How strange that the very naturalness of their devotion had turned their parents' adjoining homes into armed enemy camps. Hazel still couldn't understand her mother's revulsion when she discovered her daughter had a "crush" on the older girl next door. But the memory of her mother's bitter denunciation of Tommy, and the angry words that ensued between the two families still had the power to tear agonizingly through Hazel's mind.

Later Tommy's family had moved away without allowing the girls even to say goodbye. The family pastor had come to pray with Hazel and her parents to exorcise the "wicked and evil" thing that had come into their lives. Perhaps it was that, more than anything else, that had fastened the horrible scars of shame and guilt across Hazel's heart so that never again could she think of love and tenderness without the dreadful remembered sensation of guilty fear.

If only both sets of parents had been less dramatic about it... had treated it as a normal crush, perhaps a reasonable adjustment could have been reached later by Hazel. But their super-dramatics only served to freeze her emotionally into the very pattern her parents feared.

And then again, if only they hadn't made such an issue of things when she met Jim some months later, things might have fallen naturally into a different pattern for her. She might have been able, if they'd let her alone, to respond to the attraction he felt for her, and have fallen in love with him. But, inevitably, as soon as her mother
knew that Jim was interested, she began her openly obvious campaign to see that Hazel married him.

"Now is your chance to make something of yourself," her mother nagged. "You're just too young to realize what you and that horrible girl branded yourselves with, carrying on like you did," she sniffed in scorn. "If you get married to Jim, as any decent girl would, you'll be a respectable married woman and we can hold up our heads again. . . ." The pressure only served to mix Hazel up. Still, anything would be preferable to her mother's hounding and watching her every minute.

To add to her grief, Tommy had never written since moving away. Eventually this apparent betrayal had weighted the scales in favor of Jim. It wasn't until after the wedding that her mother confessed contritely that a number of letters from Tommy had been burned "to save Hazel embarrassment." They came from another city.

Perhaps it wasn't Jim's fault that he brought none of the tender glory that Hazel had wistfully hoped for to their marriage. Nor that he couldn't understand and was impatient of her lack of response to his rough demands. But by the time he left for a new duty station two weeks after the wedding, Hazel already knew that the new relationship was empty of meaning for her.

Nor was it too odd that, left alone most of this first year, she should respond to the questing look in Pat's brown eyes that were so very much like Tommy's.

It wasn't too long before Pat began coming downstairs at seven to walk home with Hazel after her work was done. Often she would invite the lonely girl in to have coffee or a glass of wine. Pat, raised since babyhood in the downtown hotel, appreciatively drank in the homey atmosphere of the little apartment.

Sometimes they went to movies together, and soon, without meaning to, Hazel realized they were spending almost every evening of the week together. There were times when Pat talked of her studies. She was majoring in psychology, and Hazel would listen wide-eyed to the amazing knowledge about interesting things that the older girl was acquiring. There were other times when Hazel told Pat haltingly of her life before her marriage to Jim, of the crowded small home across town, of the father who drank too much, and the mother who nagged. But she never mentioned Tommy.

One night she did admit to Pat that her marriage to Jim was not what she had dreamed it would be. Slowly, haltingly she recounted the reasons reluctantly, wanting to find excuses for Jim while she talked.

"I . . . . I think I've tried," she finished humbly, puzzled at her own defensiveness, feeling disloyal to Jim. Yet she felt better for having confided in the sympathetic girl.

Pat's eyes were patient and understanding as she touched Hazel's arm. "I'm sure you have, my dear," she said. "I think you've made him a good wife, as far as he's allowed you to." She looked away to the rim of hills outside the window. "Better than he deserves," she muttered almost under her breath.

Lately Pat had seemed protective as well as sympathetic and Hazel had come to depend on seeing her every day. What fun it was to listen to her talk of her travels, or of the books she had read. Sometimes they would sit in silent companionship, listening to Pat's collection of classical records. With Pat, in her comfortable slacks and shirt, sitting across the room from her, Hazel felt an odd sense of completion. The big girl's eyes were so understanding, so eager and . . . and tender. Without realizing how it had come about, Hazel found herself wishing that Pat would stay in the little apartment with her always. And in her dreams, when something unknown frightened her, it was Pat who held her close and reassured her, not Jim.
Now that the letter had come, Hazel knew it would be hard to tell Pat she was leaving to be with him. What she wouldn’t . . . couldn’t tell her was that if Jim would agree, she would stay in San Diego, and find work there. It was the only way left to salvage their marriage, she knew that now. Only last night, saying goodnight at the apartment, she had sensed the trembling urgency struggling for release in Pat. And the answering response in her own blood had left her weak and filled with longing. Not by any word between them, but by something electric and unspoken.

Although it would hurt both of them, she knew she must go to Jim, severing the sweet companionship that was becoming increasingly dear to her. The association that was trembling on the threshold of something much, much deeper.

Pat was waiting in the hotel lobby, as usual, when she got off work at seven. Falling naturally into perfect stride as they walked towards the apartment, Hazel told the big girl of her plans to join Jim. She touched Pat’s arm as she finished. “I’ll write to you, and . . . and I want very much to hear from you, too.”

Pat paused to light a cigarette, and Hazel noticed, dismayed, that her friend’s hands were shaking. But when she spoke, her voice was level and flat, as if every emotion had been forcibly ejected from it.

“Of course, Hazel. But . . . but you won’t be gone long?”

Hesitating over her words, she answered, “I . . . I don’t know. M. .m. .maybe not.”

Without speaking again, they resumed their walk, but, miserably, Hazel could feel the tight control that Pat was holding over herself. How could she hurt this wonderful girl who meant so much to her? But she had to. Her duty was to Jim, and he wanted her to join him. Maybe this time it really would be different. Maybe he’d made up his mind to make a success of their marriage after all. To love, honor and cherish her, as their wedding vows had said.

“Here we are,” Pat broke into her reverie. “I’ll see you up to your door, then I’ll be on my way,” she said crisply. “You’ve got your packing to do.” But her eyes when they met Hazel’s were lost and forsaken.

“Thank you, Pat,” Hazel murmured, as they started up the stairs. “I’ll . . . I’ll phone you tomorrow before I leave.”

But there was a yellow envelope slipped half-way under the locked door when they reached her apartment.

“Just a minute, Pat, don’t go yet.” Hazel touched her arm lightly and she stayed, her eyes watching warily as Hazel read the contents of the telegram.

It was from Jim, of course.

“RESTRICTED TO SHIP NEXT TEN DAYS. SORRY, TOO MUCH PARTY FIRST NIGHT IN PORT. BETTER NOT COME DOWN. SHIP LEAVES FOR HONOLULU TEN DAYS. SEE YOU IN ABOUT THREE WEEKS. AS ALWAYS, JIM.”

Yes, Jim, as always, at the eleventh hour had let her down. Still, sudden tremendous relief flooded her being. Now she could admit to herself how much she had dreaded seeing Jim, submitting to his temper tirades, his sly brutalities. And what was more, she could admit it at last to Pat, too.

Now she could voice what had been in her mind these past few months. She would tell Pat about Tommy and confess her need to find that lost tenderness again. She had tried marriage and failed . . . whether it was her own fault or Jim’s she was not sure. Perhaps some day she would try again, the Fates would decide. Meanwhile, now, in the magic presence of this girl she had come to care so much for, one door had closed, and another was opening.

Hazel put her arm around Pat’s waist and opened the door with her key.
“Come in, darling,” she said softly. “I’m not going away after all . . . ever.”
And her eyes told Pat that she was glad.
Then, as she put the coffee pot on the stove, she told the other girl her story,
chattering with an abandonment of relief brought about by her new decision. And
in her joy at being able at last to confide in her friend, she didn’t notice that Pat said
nothing in reply, only sat lighting a new cigarette on the embers of the old one. Finally
through with her tale, Hazel came to stand in front of her and placed a timid hand
on her shoulder.
“But you’re not glad . . . about us . . . that . . . that I knew . . .” she stammered,
puzzled and suddenly alarmed.
Pat turned her troubled face away from Hazel’s searching look for a long moment,
and then she sighed and straightened her back. Her eyes, when they rested on Hazel’s,
held a new determination.
“I’m glad you know why your marriage was failing, Hazel. And . . . in a way that I
can’t explain . . . I’m glad, too, that there was a Tommy in your life. But,” she rose and
grasped the smaller girl’s shoulders, “There is something I want you to promise me.”
“I . . . I promise . . .” Hazel stammered, unable to guess what was on Pat’s mind.
“If you think that you care for me now, I want you to go to Jim. Stay with him,
follow him, be near him and with him for at least six months. Talk to him, try to
understand him and help him to understand you, Hazel. If all else fails, go to a mar-
riage counselor. You’re still young and you owe it to yourself to make your marriage
work. Believe me, I know what I’m talking about.”
Hazel’s eyes fell and her shoulders drooped. Rejection was the last thing she had
expected and she didn’t know how to meet it.
Then Pat went on. “But remember this. If, after six months’ trial . . . or even a year’s
trial, it doesn’t work . . . I’ll . . . I’ll be waiting right here.” She lifted Hazel’s chin gently
and gazed deeply into her eyes. “I’d wait forever for you, my dearest.”
And Hazel knew she was speaking the truth.