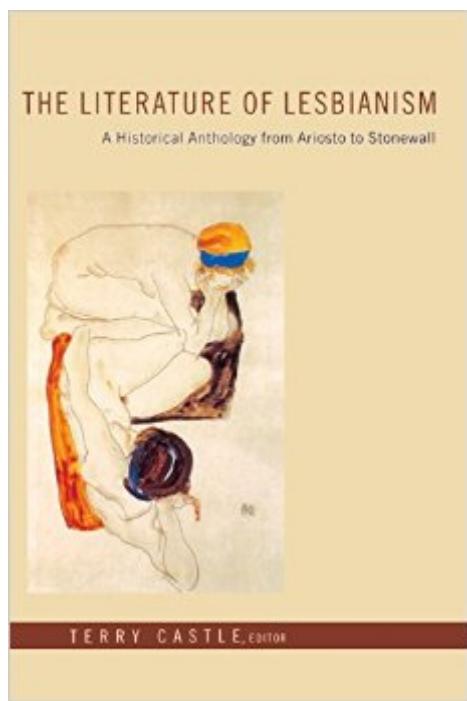


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# The Literature Of Lesbianism



## Synopsis

Since the Renaissance, countless writers have been magnetized by the notion of love between women. From Renaissance love poems to twentieth-century novels, plays, and short stories, *The Literature of Lesbianism* brings together hundreds of literary works on the subject of female homosexuality. This is not an anthology of "lesbian writers." Nor is it simply a one-sided compendium of "positive" or "negative" images of lesbian experience. Terry Castle explores the emergence and transformation of the "idea of lesbianism": its conceptual origins and how it has been transmitted, transformed, and collectively embellished over the past five centuries. Both male and female authors are represented here and they display an astonishing and often unpredictable range of attitudes. Some excoriate female same-sex love; some eulogize it. Some are salacious or satiric; others sympathetic and confessional. Yet what comes across everywhere is just how visibleâ•as a literary themeâ•Sapphic love has always been in Western literature. As Castle demonstrates, it is hardly the taboo or forbidden topic we sometimes assume it to be, but has in fact been a central preoccupation for many of our greatest writers, past and present. Beginning with an excerpt from Ariosto's comic epic poem, *Orlando Furioso*, the anthology progresses chronologically through the next five centuries, presenting selections from Shakespeare, John Donne, Katherine Philips, Aphra Behn, Sor Juana Ines de la Cruz, Alexander Pope, the Marquis de Sade, Samuel Taylor Coleridge, Charlotte BrontÃ«, Emily Dickinson, Guy de Maupassant, Henry James, Willa Cather, Virginia Woolf, Ernest Hemingway, Nella Larsen, Colette, and Graham Greene, among many others. It also includes some anonymous worksâ•several published here for the first timeâ•as well as numerous translations from the writers of antiquity, such as Sappho, Ovid, Martial, and Juvenal, whose rediscovery in the early Renaissance helped shape subsequent Western literary representations of female homosexuality.

## Book Information

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## Customer Reviews

This book is amazing. It is over 1000 pages long. It contains writings by male and female authors since the Renaissance. Far from being about a minority sexual preference, this anthology shows that many major authors have written about lesbianism, some to the point of obsession. I highly recommend it to any reader, lesbian, gay, straight, female or male, who is interested in a new way of looking at literary history.

This fat, heavy paperback is a treasure-trove of true literature. Nothing pulpy, trashy, or even trendy about it, this book is jam-packed with quality excerpts, full-length pieces, and poems all of which come together to provide a valuable historical look into the subject matter. Personally, I found the pieces written by men to be the least appealing; some of them smack, if ever-so-slightly, of that notorious voyeurism that so many men have for two women. I would still have to say that they were aptly chosen for this book, every piece has its purpose in rounding out the whole. I highly recommend this book for lovers of true literature, and for anyone wanting to see an excellent historical snapshot of the subject matter through many genres from the sixteenth century to the present time. Be prepared, the excerpts will whet your appetite to read the full piece in many cases. I have since gone on a reading odyssey of the Vita Sackville-West/Violet Trefusis [tragic] love story after reading several excerpts, including one from Orlando by Virginia Wolff (who also had an affair with Vita, which pales in light of the Trefusis story.) Excerpts from all three - Vita, Violet, and Virginia - are here. This collection is worth every penny, every page. Highly recommend it!

This book is incredibly insightful into our history as gay women. It's a rare perspective to look specifically at gay women rather than men and the results are surprising. Knowledge increases even as the 1700s pass--which reminded me that gay rights is a much older issue than stonewall. It's unbiased, showing everything from hilariously incorrect indictments of lesbianism to beautiful love stories to raunchy erotica. Overall, this is the most comprehensive look into lesbian history I've ever read.

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