

best SEX

writing and movies about LGBTQ+

quatrefolio

Meet 1st Q Scholarship winner • No more overdue fines • Queer Voices lives again

Bikeway signs point to Q • On gender and sexual diversity

queer SEX:

HOW DO YOU LIKE IT?

Quatrefoil asked writers, teachers and readers about their sexual preferences—that is, what they prefer in writing and movies when it comes to depictions of LGBTQ+ sex and sexuality.

ONE

In literature, do you prefer frank, explicit depictions of sexuality or more indirect language?

TWO

Please name the book(s) or author(s) you most admire for how physical intimacy is handled.

THREE

What sexually frank LGBTQ+ book or movie is your all-time favorite?

By Claude Peck, Q board member



Dianna Hunter

1. The answer depends on the literature. In fiction, if the writer has created visceral, embodied characters and a situation fraught with sexual tension, then, yes oh yes! As a reader, I yearn for release. Give it to me right now! But in nonfiction—particularly in memoir and autobiography—where sensitivity, real people’s feelings, and contested memories come into play, metaphor and suggestion can be the best ways to go. There’s a lot to be said for such restraints, since they let the reader participate in the storytelling through imagination, which can lead to the most visceral reading experience of all.

2. As I thought about how to answer this question, I realized that memory didn’t serve very well to call up specific sex scenes or descriptions from books I’ve read. What comes across much more strongly is the situation, the characters’ desire, the difficulty of fighting for love through personal fears, sexist conditioning and homophobia, both internal and external. These concerns will differ across intersections of race, class, and generation. There’s an engaging list of favorite lesbian sex scenes at autostraddle.com, a self-described, “progressively feminist online community for multiple generations of kickass lesbian, bisexual & otherwise inclined ladies (and their friends).” My own favorites include “The Price of Salt” by Claire Morgan (pen name of Patricia Highsmith), “Hood” and “Kissing the Witch” by Emma Donoghue, and “Rubyfruit Jungle” by Rita Mae Brown

3. It’s hard to beat the consummation scene in “Desert Hearts,” Donna Deitch’s 1984 adaptation of Jane Rule’s 1964 lesbian novel, “Desert of the Heart.” When a special viewing of “Desert Hearts” was set up in Duluth’s historic Norshor Theater shortly after the film came out. I had seen very little—possibly even zero—explicit lesbian imagery on screen. I remember North Country dykes showed up en masse, and I felt a sense of community and belonging, as well as the scopophilic thrill of seeing my life and my kind of love represented on the big screen. I still remember some of the erotic images. After the showing, one local wit quipped, “There wasn’t a dry seat in the house.”

—Dianna Hunter is the author of “Wild Mares: My Lesbian Back-to-the-Land Life.” She lives in Duluth.



David Pratt

1. I prefer it be more indirect unless there is something essential to know about the body parts and bodily functions in question. If I start to get too turned on I lose the thread of the book.

2. Outside of erotica, I can’t remember the sex scenes in most fiction I’ve read, but I do know... [see below]

3. ...that Rafe Haze’s “The Next” does about the best job I have ever seen of infusing erotica into a literary work. Part of why it works so well harks back to my answer to #1. There are things about the body of one of the participants that you have to know and that are directly connected to his status as an erotic object. On the movie front, I would say “Shortbus” and “I Am Curious (Yellow)”.

—David Pratt’s most recent novel is “Todd Sweeney, the Fiend of Fleet High.” He lives in Michigan.



Lisa Vecoli

1. It depends. Too much too soon is not sexy. But too much lead-up and no reward is unsatisfying. So I enjoy explicit depictions, but not in the first 20 pages of a novel.
2. Among the books that I think have done a good job of balancing character development and sexuality:
 “Curious Wine” by Katherine Forrest
 “Above All, Honor” by Radclyffe
 “Death by the Riverside” and “Deaths of Jocasta” by Jean Redmann
 “And Playing the Role of Herself” by K.E. Lane

These are some of my favorite books and I regularly reread them—enjoying them every time!

3. See list above.

—Lisa Vecoli is former director of the Tretter Collection at the University of Minnesota.



Chris Hewitt

1. Frank, please.
2. It’s hard to think of just one but I guess I’d say Edmund White, who has covered so much ground (even though I have some issues with him).
3. Of White’s work, I’d say “The Farewell Symphony,” but I’d also mention Brad Gooch’s “The Golden Age of Promiscuity,” which earns high marks for frankness.

—Chris Hewitt writes about theater, movies and the arts for Star Tribune.

Adam Haslett

1. The chief enemy of good writing about sex is the same enemy all good writing must confront— cliché. But few subjects are as buried beneath cliché as sex is, so the effort to uncover it must be all the greater. And in this, explicitness is enormously useful because it particularizes the very things cliché skips over.

2. “The Eye in the Door,” Pat Barker
 “The Lover,” Marguerite Duras
 “Our Lady of the Flowers,” Jean Genet

3. “At Swim, Two Boys,” Jamie O’Neill
 “Weekend,” written and directed by Andrew Haigh

—Adam Haslett’s most recent novel is “Imagine Me Gone.” He lives in New York.



Greg Hewitt

1. Most writing or viewing of sex in literature or porn bores me, which isn’t to say I don’t hunger for the erotic in all the arts. It seems to me the same old mistake over and over: that representations can make present what is absent. To paraphrase (and probably bastardize) Plato’s essential character, Socrates: the erotic is that infinite curiosity for a person or an idea or an idea embodied in a person. I take that to mean the erotic is a complex and ongoing process of the mind and body in dialogue.

2. Walt Whitman’s “Leaves of Grass,” especially the “Song of Myself,” “Calamus” and “Body Electric” sections. Andre Gide, “The Counterfeiters”—if you’ve never read it, do! It will change your life! Of course, E.M. Forster’s posthumous “Maurice.” “Collected Poems” of C.P. Cavafy, the most accessible and melancholic and erotic of poets.

3. Jean Genet—all his novels, but especially “A Thief’s Journal,” “Querelle” and “Our Lady of the Flowers.”

—Greg Hewitt’s most recent book of poetry is “Blindsight.” His novel “No Names” is forthcoming. He is a Quatrefoil board member.



Sherrie Fernandez-Williams

1. Typically, I prefer indirect language/ or language that demonstrates mastery of craft

2. Barrie Jean Borich’s “My Lesbian Husband”
 Audre Lorde’s “Zami A New Spelling of My Name”
 Alice Walker’s “The Color Purple”

3. “Saving Face,” “The Kids are Alright,” “Pariah”—I am grateful for Lesbian centered stories and I am especially grateful when the protagonists are POC.

—Writer and educator Sherrie Fernandez-Williams is the author of “Soft: A Memoir” and co-curator of the Queer Voices reading series.

John Medeiros

1. Either, but only if done artistically and not gratuitously. I don’t mind words like “cock” or “ass” in and of themselves, but larger context—and larger content—matters to me more. I’m more about what the writer does with his/her words.

2. Jeannette Winterson is a good example. Lovely language with whatever words she uses.

3. “The Carnivorous Lamb” by Agustin Gomez Arcos. Hands down.

—John Medeiros is a writer, lawyer and co-editor of the anthology “Queer Voices.”

William Reichard

1. I don't prefer one approach over the other. It depends on the book. Some books need frank, explicit depictions of sexuality. Others do not. Since you mentioned Garth Greenwell, I'll use his soon-to-be-released novel "Cleanness" as an example. Two chapters in the book feature sexually explicit scenes. Neither of these chapters add anything useful to the novel. The first one, in fact, has nothing to do with the narrative, except that the novel's narrator is one of the parties involved. I wasn't put off by the explicit language. I actually prefer that writers be honest when portraying sexual scenes. I was put off by the fact that the two chapters felt gratuitous.

2. I've always admired the way that Mark Doty writes about sex, particularly in his poetry. He doesn't shy away from using explicit words, or describing sexual acts. When these elements help to make the poems stronger, he uses them. His approach seems very pragmatic, because he says what needs to be said. I also admire the way that writer/artist David Wojnarowicz wrote about sex. He wrote very explicit and detailed scenes, and they were an intrinsic part of the overall narrative of his work. His visual artwork is much the same: graphic, but not pornographic. Poet Brian Teare also uses explicit sexual situations in his work, but the work is so multilayered that these elements are intrinsic to the poetry. His books "Pleasure" and "Companion Grasses" are two of my favorites, and his latest, "Doomstead Days," is also very strong.

3. This is a hard question. Every time I'm asked to name my favorite book or movie, I forget everything I've ever read or seen. I thought that the sexual scenes in "Call Me By Your Name" were well done. There was a lot of passion in those scenes, and it was effective. My favorite film with sexually frank gay scenes is probably "For a [Lost?] German Soldier," a Dutch film from 1992. Really a beautiful, sad film. My favorite book of this type is "Close to the Knives: A Memoir of Disintegration" by David Wojnarowicz.

—William Reichard's most recent book is *"The Night Horse: New and Selected Poems."*



Al Borcharding

1. I prefer in general more indirect language and less frank depictions. Maybe some of the appeal is an element of surprise in what I'm reading or maybe the slight lag in discovering what's happening makes it more enticing for me.

2. I read Garth Greenwell's book "What Belongs to You" within the year and remember enjoying those depictions (and liking the book overall a lot!). I remember Scott Heim's books ("Mysterious Skin" and "In Awe") for being pretty sensual and sexy but in almost a more shocking way and, although sometimes that might be off-putting for me, in those cases it kinda worked. What I remember about Alan Hollinghurst novels is more that one

barely recognizes what's happening (although some of that might just be my poor recollection) and I like that sort of dreaminess.

3. The book that has stayed with me the most, and over quite a long time, is Andrew Holleran's "Dancer From the Dance."

—Al Borcharding is a Quatrefoil volunteer whose writing has appeared in "Queer View Mirror" and "Quickies."

Lewis DeSimone

1. I prefer more indirect language, particularly since I've gotten older. When I was coming out, though, I sought more explicit works—if only out of sexual curiosity. What was particularly valuable then were stories that depicted sex and romance together (something you don't really get from porn), to counter the voices in the larger culture that would deny gay people's ability to join love with sex. Ultimately, though, I think sex in literature needs to serve some larger purpose—development of the characters and theme. My own work includes a lot less explicit sex than it used to.

2. In literature: D.H. Lawrence (in general)

In film: "Brokeback Mountain," "My Beautiful Laundrette"

3. In film: "Brokeback Mountain," because the sexual and romantic aspects of the relationship are so beautifully intertwined.

—Lewis DeSimone's most recent novel is *"Channeling Morgan."*



Brian Malloy

1. I am perhaps not the best respondent. I'm not a prude, but most of the books I read leave it to your imagination. I admire frankness up until a point. I think of the comedy "Top Secret," where the camera pans to the fireplace whenever a scene becomes explicit. I have read very few books that present a sex scene from start to finish. Typically there is a scene cut or a summary.

2. "The Boys on the Rock" by John Fox. I admire how the adolescent narrator expresses his desires and how he describes men he finds attractive, e.g., the guy with the ass. "Dancer from the Dance" by Andrew Holleran—there is romantic longing even in the descriptions of casual sex.

3. I think the film "Latter Days" did the best job depicting sex. The scene that is not explicit but took my breath away none-the-less is in the film "Another Country," when Guy Bennett holds James Harcourt on the boat. I swooned.

—Brian Malloy's novels include *"The Year of Ice."* In 2019, he taught a workshop, *"Writing the AIDS Generation,"* at Quatrefoil.

Real ID

Q workshop sorts gender and sexual identities

The recent proliferation of words describing gender and sexual identity has been both liberating and, to many, confusing. In a lively workshop at Quatrefoil in November, Ash and Gray Hardell sifted through this evolving wordscape and shared their own stories. Ash Hardell wrote “The ABCs of LGBT” and makes videos on YouTube. Gray works in business and as an LGBTQ rights advocate. Each identifies as non-binary, queer and trans. They unfurled a big paper banner on which they had gathered 175 terms that have entered the lexicon. Participants placed stickers alongside terms with which they identified. “Every identity up here says it’s rebelling against the idea that you have to fit in a box,” Ash said. Scan the list here to see words you identify with (and others you may never have encountered).



On a Bicycle

Built for Q

Partnering with Midtown Greenway

If you are a regular on the 5.5-mile Midtown Greenway in Minneapolis, you’ll notice new signs for Quatrefoil near the popular bike path’s 13th Avenue S. on-off ramp. As part of a new Adopt-a-Greenway partnership with Midtown Greenway Coalition, metal county signs pointing to Quatrefoil will be installed in spring 2020 and will remain in place for at least two years. The library is located just one block south of that intersection, and has a bike rack near the entrance facing the parking lot. (Also near that entrance is a 24-hour drop box for leaving books and DVDs during non-business hours.) The Quatrefoil board hopes the partnership encourages more patrons to bike (or walk, or scooter) to the library. And the signs will promote Quatrefoil to the 5,000 users per day who pass by there in warm-weather months.

Quatrefoil's First Scholarship Winner

University of Minnesota junior is active in LGBTQ+ campus groups.

By Claude Peck, Q board member

Luis Mendoza, a 20-year-old junior at the University of Minnesota and winner of the first ever Quatrefoil Scholarship, may be the U's only business major who's also active in both the Queer Student Cultural Center (QSCC) and the U's Gender and Sexuality Center for Queer and Trans Life.

Luis was awarded \$1,000 toward his 2019 tuition by Quatrefoil. Funding comes from donors and a grant to Q from San Diego Pride.

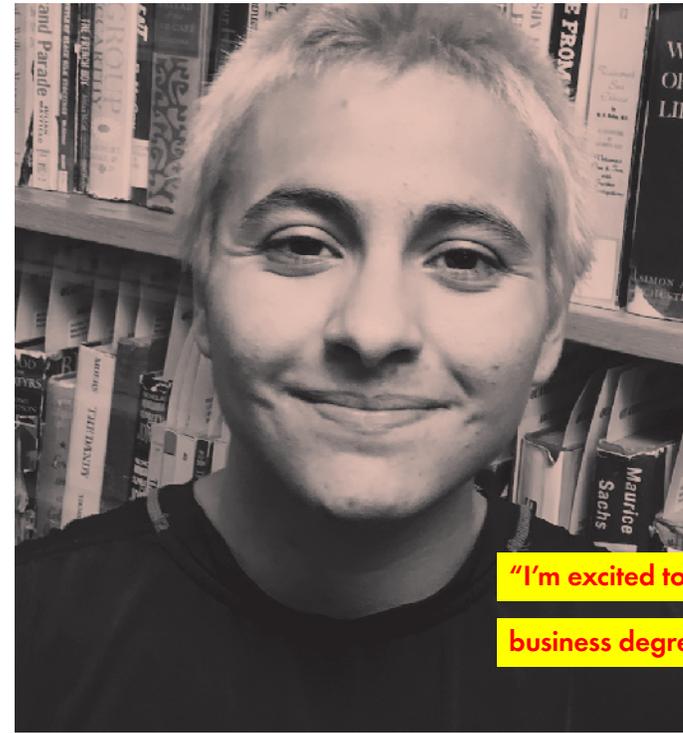
Some of his queer peers think a degree in business "is the worst thing you could do," Mendoza said. "My attitude is that I'm good with marketing, and a lot of organizations in the community lack access to business and marketing skills. I want to use my studies to help those people."

True to that belief, Mendoza is majoring in marketing at the U's Carlson School of Management, and is getting a minor in business analytics.

"As a queer person of color, I do find the business school pretty heteronormative," Mendoza said, "but I've found an LGBTQ+ group, Compass," at the school.

He challenged gender norms when he attended a career fair with nails painted, hair dyed and wearing heels. "Just because I'm not someone's cup of tea doesn't mean I should hide," he said, smiling.

Mendoza, a New Jersey native, was not out at high school. "I'm very grateful to be here in Minnesota because I like the community I found here." In addition to his studies, Men-



"I'm excited to do good with a business degree." -LUIS MENDOZA

doza has a work-study job coordinating social media for the Gender and Sexuality Center. He's active in the QSCC, which plans events that include a Queer Homecoming dance and a weeklong series during National Coming Out Day in October.

"Quatrefoil is thrilled to give its first scholarship to Luis," said board member Paul Kaefer, who chairs the library's Scholarship Committee. "He represents exactly the kind of enthusiastic students we want to continue to engage: involved in the community and dedicated to making positive change."

Mendoza heard about Quatrefoil's new scholarship via social media. He applied "because I was really interested in the organization and liked the idea of having it as one of my benefactors. It means a lot to me to get this.

I'm from a low-income background, so I rely on scholarships. It's great to get something from my own community. And Quatrefoil is a really good resource, aside from just the money."

The next \$1,000 scholarship will be awarded in summer of 2020. Those interested in applying can find details at <https://www.qlibrary.org/home/quatrefoil-library-scholarship>

Queer Voices Heard Again

Quatrefoil and Hennepin
County Library revive
the series

By Claude Peck, Q board member

Queer Voices, the long-running reading series that ceased operations when its home base at Intermedia Arts closed in 2017, lives again.

Quatrefoil and Hennepin County Library agreed to take on the series, keep its name and co-present events, starting with four dates in 2020, two at Quatrefoil and two at the Minneapolis Central library.

Lisa Marie Brimmer and Sherrie Fernandez-Williams will co-curate Queer Voices. Brimmer, an interdisciplinary artist, writer, educator and activist, was equity and public programming manager at Intermedia. She is an editor of the “Queer Voices” anthology (Minnesota Historical Society Press), which gave free public readings for hundreds of people in 2019. Fernandez-Williams earned her MFA in Writing from Hamline University. She is an award-winning author, teacher and arts administrator. She is the author of “Soft: A Memoir” and has published poems and essays in various literary journals.

“I’m beyond thrilled to bring Queer Voices into another life with the wonderful Sherrie Fernandez-Williams,” Brimmer said, “We are so glad to have a new home with Quatrefoil and to work with Hennepin County Library. Queer Voices was the first reading I ever went to as a young writer, circa 2005. I

hope we can create meaningful experiences and build with local LGBTQIA+ writers. There are so many powerhouses that are established, and voices yet to be revealed.”

Since its beginnings as a program of SASE in the 1990s, Queer Voices has presented LGBTQ+ writers in all genres. In 2005, writers John Medeiros and Andrea Jenkins became co-curators of the series, which moved to Intermedia Arts in 2006.

The first Queer Voices reading of 2020 is March 20 at Quatrefoil, followed by a Pride Month reading June 25 at Minneapolis Central Library. Lineups for all 2020 events will be announced soon. The readings are free. Queer Voices also plans pop-up events, writing workshops and more.



Quatrefoil Ends

Collection of

Overdue Fines

Following a summer-long experiment that saw many patrons returning library materials to take advantage of an amnesty on overdue fines, Quatrefoil Library’s board of directors decided to continue the amnesty program indefinitely.

Under the new policy, patrons are still expected to return (or renew) checked-out books and DVDs by their due date, but they will not be fined for late returns. Those who have overdue materials at home are encouraged to return them, but will not be fined.

Quatrefoil made the move in concert with others. Libraries from Phoenix and Detroit to San Francisco and St. Paul recently dropped late fines, recognizing that they may make some patrons with overdue books hesitant to return to the library. The American Library Association in January issued a resolution saying “imposition of monetary library fines creates a barrier to the provision of library and information services.”

Increasing access is a key part of the Quatrefoil mission, said board president Nanette Stearns. “Over the summer we had numerous examples of patrons who were relieved about the amnesty on fines and who said they were glad to be coming back in,” Stearns said. “And we had a decent number of library materials returned. So the board unanimously supported extending the program indefinitely.”

The library invites patrons to make every effort to return borrowed books and DVDs by their due date so that they may be checked out by other library users.

While the library brings in money when fines are paid, it is committed to finding other sources for that income, Stearns said.

Meet More

Amazing

Q Desk Volunteers

Quatrefoil relies on more than 80 veteran and newer volunteers to staff the front desk and keep the library open seven days per week throughout the year. Here are some of them.



Chris Meyer

Occupation: Digital Specialist
Preferred pronouns: He/Him
Regular shift: Fourth Tuesday of the month
Volunteer since: 2015
Volunteers because: I love libraries and enjoy connecting with new people in the community.
Favorite LGBTQ book (or author): John Waters
Favorite LGBTQ movie: “The Boys in the Band”



David Zwak

Occupation: Accountant
Preferred pronouns: He/Him
Regular shift: Third Tuesday of the Month
Volunteer since: 2019 (and a new board member)
Volunteers because: I have fond memories of spending time at libraries as a kid. Would have loved access to an LGBTQ library as a kid. I hope to ensure access for more people.
Favorite LGBTQ movie: “God’s Own Country”

2019: Year in Review

MAY-JUNE • Minneapolis novelist Brian Malloy led “Writing the AIDS Generation,” a free 10-week writing workshop. Students issued a chapbook and gave a group reading at the library in July.

JUNE 22-23 • Pride book sale in Loring Park

JUNE 28 • Stonewall 50th-anniversary event at Landmark Center, St. Paul

JULY • University of Minnesota junior Luis Mendoza was named the first winner of annual Quatrefoil Scholarship (see page 8)

SEPTEMBER • Josina Manu Maltzman led five-week free writing workshop at the library

SEPT. 20 • “Queer Voices” group reading

OCT. 13 • Mississippi riverboat fall-color cruise

OCT. 18 • Gay fiction reading with Gary Eldon Peter, David Pratt and Lewis DeSimone

NOV. 6 • Trebor Healey reading

NOV. 15 • Ash and Gray Hardell led interactive workshop on gender and sexual diversity (see page 12)

DEC. 14 • Book event for “Precious and Adored: The Love Letters of Rose Cleveland and Evangeline Simpson Whipple, 1890-1918”

2020 Dates to Remember

MARCH 7, 11 AM-4 PM • Book and DVD sale at Quatrefoil

MARCH 20, 7 PM • Queer Voices reading at Quatrefoil

JUNE 25, 7 PM • Queer Voices reading, Minneapolis Central Library

JUNE 27-28, ALL DAY • Pride book sale, Loring Park

SEPT. 18, 7 PM • Queer Voices reading at Quatrefoil

OCT. 25, 7 PM • Queer Voices reading, Minneapolis Central Library

Help Quatrefoil Thrive

Go to www.qlibrary.org and view various ways to contribute—through membership, an annual gift, a bequest, shopping at our regular book sales.

Buy books and DVDs from us anytime on Amazon, at www.amazon.com/shops/QuatrefoilLibrary

Volunteer: We rely on more than 80 volunteers to run the front desk and help with special events and library operations. Go to Quatrefoil's Facebook page and click "Volunteer."

Give us your used books and DVDs: Drop off LGBTQ+ books and DVDs during library hours, or contact us. New materials are added to the collection, and we sell duplicates to support operations.



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HOURS

Sat.-Sun., 10 a.m.-5 p.m.

Weekdays, 7-9 p.m.

Wednesdays, 1-5 p.m.



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