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# Poems Between Women



## Synopsis

The collection *Poems Between Women* explores many facets of female-female relationships in poems not only about love or affection between or inspired by women but also about the moments that complicate and call into question the nature of sexuality and intimacy between women. Including women married and single, young and old, lesbian, bisexual, and heterosexual, the anthology covers historical development and changing mores through the seventeenth century, after the Restoration of Charles II, a time of relative freedom for women; the eighteenth century, when the cult of romantic friendship reached its peak; the nineteenth century, when women writers wrote about issues of same-sex desire indirectly and explored complex issues such as death in tones of weariness and resignation; and the twentieth century, when poets began to engage in more overt explorations of women's bodies, sensuality, and lovemaking. Emma Donoghue's introduction deftly guides readers into the rich tradition of women's poetry in English, exploring the relationships between poets and their muses and poets and their cultures. *Poems Between Women* is testimony not only to the recurring theme of the unique bonds among women but also to the universality of love, friendship, and creativity.

## Book Information

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## Customer Reviews

This book gathers the work of more than 100 female poets, of primarily British and American descent, since the 17th century. Emma Donoghue's astute introductory essay suggests a coherent

tradition between the poetry of pre-20th-century romantic friendships and explicit contemporary lesbian poetry. She includes work by well-known writers such as Aphra Behn, Elizabeth Barrett Browning, Adrienne Rich, and Audre Lorde, and also introduces the work of lesser-known historical writers. The brief biographies of the poets at the end of the book illustrate not only the varied backgrounds of these writers working outside the mainstream, but also the kinds of networks and alliances they formed to sustain one another.

Poets from the last 400 years contribute to this rich anthology of women's love poetry, which includes works from Elizabeth Barrett Browning, Emily Dickinson, Audre Lorde and Adrienne Rich. This collection, revealing secrets, longings and startling friendships, is an eloquent tribute to love shared by women. (Chicago Tribune) Dazzling in its range and scope, [Poems Between Women] places in sharp focus the matrix of women's lives, socially and emotionally, over four centuries.... Outstanding. (San Francisco Examiner-Chronicle)

This is a lovely collection of poems between women, enhanced immeasurably by Donoghue's intelligent introduction and her pithy biographies of the writers. It ranges over four centuries so includes a variety of poetic styles and personal sentiments, from friendship to love to sexual intimacy. Some of the selections from the earliest period of the 1600s are real finds but it was also delightful to rediscover the woman-centeredness of 19th and 20th century poets like Rossetti, Dickinson, Millay and Amy Lowell. I especially enjoyed May Swenson's playful "Poet to Tiger." It inspired me to look up Swenson's work and, lo and behold, The Library of America is publishing *May Swenson: Collected Poems*: (Library of America #239) this year in honor of the centenary of her birth. Other poems in this collection are likely to inspire readers to pursue their own favorite's work in more depth. The book may be a bit pricey for some, but I thought it was well worth it.

Interesting side to literary and lesbian history. Very enlightening and enjoyable too.

this book is fabulous! Emma Donoghue's introduction provides fascinating contextual information, guiding the reader through attitudes toward love between women from the late 1660s to the early 1990s. The poems themselves fairly leap off the page with lives of their own. Donoghue selected poems which are quite accessible and widely varied. I did have some trouble getting past the melodrama of some of the earlier work, but once I did, I discovered many, many truly delightful

poems illuminating the myriad aspects of women's love for one another. At the end of the book is a section of biographical notes about the poets which is intriguing on its own. This volume would be an asset to anyone's library.

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