

Collection title: Lillian Faderman Papers

Dates: 1976-1989

Biography:

Lillian Faderman was born July 18, 1940 in the Bronx, New York, the daughter of a single working mother who lost most of her family in the Holocaust. Throughout her childhood, Faderman's dream was to become a movie star. Faderman's family moved to east L.A. when she was a teen and she later attended U.C. Berkeley, where she worked as a burlesque stripper to support herself. She received a B.A. in English literature from U.C. Berkeley in 1962, an M.A. in English from UCLA in 1964, and a Ph.D. in English from UCLA in 1967.

In 1967, Faderman started teaching in the English department at California State University, Fresno, where she began her career co-editing two anthologies of American multi-ethnic literature: *Speaking for Ourselves: American Ethnic Writing* (1969; 1975) and *From the Barrio: A Chicano Anthology* (1973). Faderman served in various administrative positions (1971-1976) at California State University, Fresno, including Chair of the English Department, Acting Dean of the School of Humanities and Assistant Vice President for Academic Affairs and then decided she preferred teaching and writing. Faderman, along with Phyllis Irwin, helped establish the first women's study program at California State University, Fresno in 1972. She was promoted to full Professor of English in 1973. Irwin later became her domestic partner of 40 years. They have one child: Avrom (1975-).

Faderman has published twelve books and numerous articles on lesbian history, literature and criticism. Her major books include *Lesbians in Germany* (1980), her first work in lesbian history; *Surpassing the Love of Men* (1981), a groundbreaking study of five centuries of love between women; *Scotch Verdict* (1983), which chronicles the 1810 trial of two Scottish schoolteachers accused of lesbianism; *Odd Girls and Twilight Lovers* (1991), a history of twentieth-century lesbians in America; *Chloe Plus Olivia* (1994), an anthology of lesbian literature since the seventeenth century; *I Begin My Life All Over: The Hmong and the American Immigrant Experience* (1998), which records the story of 36 Hmong immigrants to California; her memoir, *Naked in the Promised Land* (2003); and *Gay L.A.* (2006), which she co-authored with Stuart Timmons. Her articles on lesbian life and literature have appeared in diverse academic, feminist and lesbian journals, including *The New England Quarterly*, *The Massachusetts Review*, *Journal of Popular Culture*, *Higginson Journal*, *Journal of Homosexuality*, *Signs*, *Conditions* and *Gay Books Bibliography*.

Faderman's work has centered on establishing a lesbian tradition, on what she calls a "usable past." In her early works, especially in *Surpassing the Love of Men* and *Odd Girls and Twilight Lovers*, she shows that so-called romantic friendships between women were considered neither abnormal nor undesirable in prior centuries. Accordingly, women who loved women in the past were not always made to live like outlaws. Only after 1880, in the aftermath of sexology, did same-sex love between women come to be seen as suspect, degenerate or even criminal. Faderman has also written on the theme of same-sex love and

romantic friendship in poems and letters of Emily Dickinson; in novels by Henry James, Oliver Wendell Holmes, and Henry Wadsworth Longfellow and in popular magazine fiction of the early twentieth century.

Faderman's later book, *To Believe in Woman: What Lesbians Have Done for America—A History* (1999) charts romantic friendships between women and lesbian love through some of the most important social movements in the U.S. and shows how these same-sex partnerships made major feminist causes of the nineteenth and early twentieth centuries possible.

Throughout her career, Faderman has been sought after as a speaker, teacher, critic, and visiting lecturer. She has been a frequent speaker at lesbian and feminist organizations, universities, and lesbian, gay and women's organizations nationally and internationally. Her work has been translated into numerous languages, including German, Spanish, Italian, Japanese, Turkish, Czech, and Slovenian. Among her many honors are six Lambda Literary Awards, two American Library Association Awards, and several lifetime achievement awards for scholarship, including Yale University's James Brudner Award, the Monette/Horwitz Award, the Publishing Triangle Award, the ONE National Gay and Lesbian Archives Culture Hero Award, and the American Association of University Women's Distinguished Senior Scholar Award. She divides her time between Fresno and San Diego.

Acquisition history:

Lillian Faderman has been a longtime friend, former board member and researcher of the Mazer Lesbian Archives. She personally donated her substantial collection of paper materials, correspondence, periodicals and audio recordings in multiple iterations to the archive over the years.

Finding aid creator:

This finding aid was created by Micah Gottlieb, a Media Archival Studies MLIS student at UCLA, as part of a Community-Based Archiving course taught by Dr. Michelle Caswell in the Spring of 2020.

Subjects and indexing terms (local):

Lesbian authors
Lesbian college teachers
Lesbianism in literature
Emily Dickinson
Henry James
Memoir
Boston marriage
Social movements
Women's friendships
Women's marriages

Related Mazer Collections:

June L. Mazer Lesbian Archives Periodical Collection