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The Arts Issue



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+ BEHIND THE SCENES WITH BELLA LOVE

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Bookworm

Author Ann McMan finds voice and following with popular LGBTQ genre novels.

by MICHAEL J. SOLENDER • photos by JUSTIN DRISCOLL

“Backcast,” Ann McMan’s latest novel due out later this year, follows more than a dozen of the best, brightest, and most notorious lesbian authors as they attend a two-week writing retreat at Vermont’s Lake Champlain.

McMan (which is actually a pen name she prefers to use) is director of design at Davidson College. She likes to write about “what she knows,” and is very familiar with the scenic northeast lake and the world of lesbian writers.

Originally from a small town in Pennsylvania, McMan, 59, has been at Davidson since 1996. She commutes daily from Winston-Salem where she lives with her wife.

“Literature has always been a large part of my life,” says McMan. “I simply love Jane Austen and read ‘Pride and Prejudice’ every year. I’m also very interested in Southern literature like Faulkner, Eudora Welty, and Harper Lee. I love that they wrote about anti-heroes.”

Finding her voice

Though surrounded by books all her life, McMan’s

career as a novelist came to her only recently and almost accidentally.

“I’m a late bloomer,” says McMan. “I didn’t figure out I was gay until I was 30. I’d read all the classics growing up and discovered fan fiction or gay genre literature much later. In the 90s I read all the gay and lesbian literature I could. Much of it was poorly written. I thought I could do better.”

McMan took two years to write the manuscript for what turned out to be her wildly popular debut novel, “Jericho,” released in 2011.

“It sat in a drawer for years,” says McMan. “I was ultimately encouraged by a friend to post it online at the (genre fiction website) Royal Academy of Bards. I submitted it under a pseudonym in case it was poorly received.”

She needn’t have worried.

“Jericho” was awarded the 2012 Alice B. Lavender Certificate, the 2011 Lesbian Fiction Reader’s Choice Awards for Favorite Romance Book, Favorite General Fiction Book, 2012 Rainbow Honorable Mention Awards for Best Lesbian Contemporary Fiction, and Best Lesbian





Debut Novel.

“Backcast” is McMan’s seventh novel. Her work has led to two Golden Crown Literary Society awards, and her novel “Hoosier Daddy” was a 2014 Lambda Literary Award finalist.

Sense of place

McMan says she tries to capture a sense of place with her work and enjoys having the setting function like a character in her books.

“Backcast” is set at Lake Champlain and features a 200-year-old large-mouth bass,” says McMan. “The lake, of course, is a metaphor for the subterranean aspects of life we all have.”

McMan—formerly an occasional book reviewer for the *Greensboro News and Record* and driver of a bookmobile in rural North Carolina, has discovered a talent for dialogue, nuanced humor, and gay themes that go well beyond coming out of the closet.

“My books are about average people who are dropped into ridiculous and sometimes surreal situations and then left to figure things out,” says McMan, who notes she has great interest in writing about families and longer-term relationships.

“What coming-out stories are left to tell? I want to write stories about after, the next stage. We’re getting older, getting divorced, living in retirement communities. These are themes that interest me.” www.annmcman.com **LNM**