

Radclyffe

by

DK Ward

Who is Radclyffe?

Radclyffe: A simple question – I am a lesbian author of lesbian-themed books. I am a long time admirer of lesbian fiction of all types. I firmly believe that popular fiction can not only entertain but inform and support our community and ourselves. In short, I am one of those lucky people who loves what they do.

In light of several lesbian book publishers closing their doors (Press Gang Publishers, Fortitude Press, Inc., and Women Works), how will Bold Strokes Books survive with so many other up and coming lesbian publishing companies pushing for dominance in the market?

Rad: I don't think anyone wants to see a "dominant" publisher in the lesbian marketplace nor has that ever been my intention. There are more authors than any one publisher could support and hopefully, there will be more to come.

The first key to success is to publish quality books by quality authors. We work hard to do that, with an intensive "upfront screening process", in depth editorial review, and constant re-evaluation of the effectiveness of our product by staying "tuned-in" to feedback via reviews, emails, one-on-one conversations with booksellers etc. My goal has been to bridge the divide between Internet readers and "traditional" readers who have never read a story online nor joined an Internet group. I hope to do that by publishing works that will appeal to both groups. We market to both groups via newsletters, print catalogs and flyers, author websites etc and by doing so, we can expand the base population of readers and maximize sales.

Finally, distribution on a large scale internationally is absolutely key – the market is too small to exclude any sector from potential sales.

Do you think BSB will be amongst the stalwarts of lesbian publishing, such as Alyson Books, or have the long run Naiad Press had?

Rad: I wouldn't have started the company or signed authors if I didn't believe that we would grow and become firmly established in the marketplace. Lesbian readers are very loyal and will support the works of authors they admire, including buying backlisted titles. So we expect our titles to have a long life, and I expect to be publishing new works from our authors for years to come.

Your company proclaims "Where tradition meets tomorrow, writing outside the box". With that in mind, which type of manuscript do you absolutely hate having to reject, and why do so if you hate doing it? Doesn't that go against the very grain of your motto?

Rad: I will sometimes receive a manuscript where I enjoy the story (or some parts of a story) and wish I could publish it, but I don't think it will appeal to a significant portion of our readers as indicated by the current purchasing trends and other factors. Occasionally I really like a story but the technical aspects would require far more editorial input that we want to invest in one book. In that case, I'll send it back with suggestions for submitting a revised manuscript.

Because we deal in print publishing, not print on demand, we have a considerable upfront production cost due to the size of our print runs. Publishing is a business, not a hobby or a personal indulgence. I would do none of our authors a favor if I signed books that I can't sell. It diminishes the resources of the company and leaves fewer dollars for marketing the books we do publish. Choosing manuscripts, assuming all other factors such as technical excellence are equal, is a balance between creating a diverse and exciting list while publishing books which appeal to enough readers to ensure economic feasibility.

Bottom line is we can't publish every manuscript we might like to, and we have to make choices. That's why it's good for all of us--readers, writers, and publishers alike--that there will never be just "one" publisher.

Do you think you'll ever take advantage of the options to get your books into the hands of say, the visually impaired?

Rad: I don't know—I haven't investigated the economics of audio books or large-print book costs. I am always open to information and suggestions on how to reach all the readers out there.

If the world were to end tomorrow, what do you hope people would do today?

Rad: That's a lot like asking what would you do if you knew you were going to die tomorrow. That's a very individual thing and I can't answer that for anyone else. I'd say thank you to the people who have gone out of their way to help me realize my dreams, starting with my partner.

Do you take lines from the books for your titles? Or do they come from other sources/thoughts?

Rad: Actually, it's the other way around. I usually choose the title first and either work off it as a theme in a novel, or deliberately incorporate it as a line in a short

story.

I'm wondering, would you explain the process in more detail from when you receive a manuscript to that story ending up in the hands of the reader?

Rad: First off, let me direct you to two very thorough FAQ pages on the BSB website that deal with our publishing and production process--[general FAQs](#) and [production FAQs](#). There's a ton of information there about how we handle lots of the specifics in terms of editing, marketing, distribution etc.

To summarize the process--after the contract is signed, the author is given a date when the manuscript needs to be turned in for editing. At that point it's reviewed by one of the editors and an editorial overview is developed which outlines specific strengths and weaknesses of the work and what the editorial process will focus on. I review this, discuss it with the editor, and then the author receives it when the editor is ready to begin their project. Usually at least two editors are involved with each manuscript -- a substantive (content or story) editor and a copy editor. Someone asked me in one of the other Sunday brunch questions the difference, and I explained that. I will let the author and the editors know when the book is scheduled to go to print, when the manuscript needs to go from the story editor to the copy editor, and one other things such as when the cover needs to be completed. After the book is copyedited, it is typeset and proofread and final corrections are made. Our books go to print two months before the release date. And that, in a nutshell, is the process at BSB.

Do you know before you even begin writing the story that your character/s is/are going to be a "hit" with your fan base? Do you set out to make people fall for them? Or are you surprised when they continually do?

Rad: I don't intentionally create characters that I think will be a "hit." I create stories with characters that I think will be interesting and compelling and hopefully that readers will be able to relate to or find interesting/sexy/thought-provoking. The characters are of interest to me, or I wouldn't write the book. Then I'm left hoping that they'll be interesting to others<g>

You're very descriptive and there's a lot of dialogue during the sex/love making scenes in some of your books, do you ever think it may distract the reader from the scene, or that the characters talking only improves those scenes?

Rad: I think the way an author constructs an erotic scene is very individual in terms of the language that is used, the amount of dialogue that is used, when the scene is written in relationship to character development etc. I think dialogue can enhance the scene if used at the right moment. The one thing I generally caution authors against doing is trying to write "sound effects" which always come off as

unnatural. As with all things, some readers will like one author's style in terms of writing erotic scenes over another, just as they may prefer one author's writing style in any other portion of a novel. If I altered the way I wrote a sex scene because I thought some people might not like it, I would've quit a long time ago<g>

Do you think the titles for *When Dreams Tremble* and *Turn Back Time* should have been reversed? It seems in TBT that 'dreams tremble' more than the characters 'turning back time', of which there is a lot of in WDT

Rad: I suppose TBT could be switched, but I chose the titles before I started the manuscripts, and I had something specific in mind for each one of them. Turn Back Time for me was about that initial meeting where a spark of attraction and connection was obliterated by circumstance. It was very much about "if I could do it over again." When Dreams Tremble is the only title that truly represents, for me at least, what that work was about--it was the story of how we go on after a dream that defines so much of who we are and what we hope for in life is destroyed, and raises the question of whether that dream ever truly dies. And if it doesn't, how do we manage? Who do we become and what happens to the ghost of those dreams?

Will you be writing a shadowland sequel or something similar in the (near) future?

Rad: I doubt that I will write a sequel to shadowland, but I do explore issues of power in quite a few of the short stories I've been writing. Several of those will appear in both In Deep Waters anthologies I'm doing with Karin Kallmaker. In addition, one of the subplots in my upcoming *The Lonely Hearts Club* will also feature a dominant/submissive pairing (February 2008).

Ellen Hart asked this of Katherine V. Forrest and her answer was of course, *Curious Wine*. "Is there one book -- more than any other -- that you'd like to be remembered for?"

Rad: Nothing that comes close to *Curious Wine* in significance – maybe someday I'll have written one.

What would you say that would bring readers of this interview to Bold Strokes Books, or to buy your books?

Rad: We have assembled a team of dedicated professionals whose entire focus is making every book we publish the best it can be. Our authors are serious, inspired, talented, and exciting writers. We care about our readers and set the bar high for what we publish. We love what we do and hope that you will, too.

What would you say is the most unique and revolutionary element about Bold Strokes Books?

Rad: We sign authors, not manuscripts, and we are willing to invest a significant amount of editorial input to mentor authors in the technical aspects of novel writing. We tailor the editorial process to the demands of the manuscript and the level of expertise of the author – there is no “routine” process at BSB – we individualize the publishing process.

We have a common bond; Ann Bannon’s Beebo Brinker was also the first lesbian book I read. My question is: have you ever met her? If so, what was it like?

Rad: We’ve met several times, and it was inspirational. Listening to Ann talk about her first experiences writing lesbian fiction is always amazing. She is gracious, warm, and dynamic.

[NOTE: Bold Strokes Books is sponsoring a new play featuring Ann Bannon's Beebo Brinker's Series. For more information, see <http://www.beebobrinker.com/>. And there's this article: [Sapphic Pulp Fiction, Live Onstage.](#)]

Catherine Ennis once wrote a story called [To The Lightning](#), but she never wrote a sequel. It's been killing me over the years waiting for one. Has there ever been a book that you wished the author would have written a sequel to?

Rad: I wish Chris Anne Wolfe had lived much longer and written more in the Aggar series. I wish she’d written a sequel to Bitter Thorns (retitled to Roses and Thorns).

If you were stranded on an island, what three items would you wish you had brought with you (no partners, sorry Lee :))?

Rad: A satellite radio transmitter, a rubber raft, and a desalinator.

What three things would you put in a time capsule?

Rad: The Making of a Gay and Lesbian Community: Before Stonewall (1985) Starring: [Rita Mae Brown](#), [Johnnie Phelps](#) Director: [Robert Rosenberg](#) ; A Blackberry; A Computer with all the BSB books as pdfs

I'd like to thank you for taking time out of your very busy schedule to sit down and answer these questions. Is there anything you'd like to leave us with? Quotes of inspiration? Things we may not know about the author or publisher?

Rad: Writing is something you do, not something you think about. Put the first word down and the rest will follow. And enjoy.

Radclyffe,
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