

# Interview with Catherine Plato – Curve Magazine

February 2009

**Catherine: You say on your Web site that you've always wanted to write lesbian novels. Would you say then that you have no interest in breaking into the mainstream?**

Jennifer: Several years ago, I spent a ton of time and effort trying to land a New York literary agent for a mainstream mystery series I'd written. I came very, very close (I think), but no contract. Yet, even as I sent each query letter, I had mixed feelings about what I was doing. How did I want to make the most impact in the world? As a lesbian novelist. How could I ever have hopes of making more than \$500 a year writing fiction? As a mainstream novelist.

Jennifer: moment, I've shelved the series until I can gain more perspective. The first three books in the series are written, edited and ready to go, something that took me three years of full-time effort to accomplish. At some point, I'll probably either approach a lesbian publisher or send the manuscripts to a small mystery press. Or maybe I'll try querying a few more New York agents. Who knows? Unfortunately, my ambivalence has brought me to a dead halt.

**You began writing novels in your late 20s, when there was considerably less of a lesbian market than we have now. What writers were you most excited about when you started writing?**

I loved the Laura Laurano mystery series, by Sandra Scoppettone. After I finish reading books, I usually donate them to libraries. Sandra Scoppettone's are the only novels I've ever kept.

**Do you consider yourself to be part of a community of LGBT writers? (Are there many prominent--or unknown--gay authors who you've befriended or collaborated with?)**

No.

**I read that you are a Natalie Goldberg fan, and so am I! Have you ever met her or had a chance to tell her what an inspiration she has been to you?**

I haven't met her, but if I were to bump into her someday, I'd tell her that she gave me the courage to write sentences that unsettle me...and to publish them.

**Did you have any teachers who were a major inspiration to you?**

I don't know about inspiration, but I did get a really solid foundation from all of my high school English and French teachers. I attended college for one year, and studied French, so that helped, too.

**What is your favorite book at the moment?**

The same as it always is – the most recent releases from Patricia Cornwell, Sue Grafton, Elizabeth George, or Carol O'Connell.

**Do you usually read lesbian authors? Or is your library a mix of everything?**

Ever since I became intensely committed to writing, I've virtually stopped reading. The only lesbian author I read on a regular basis is Val McDermid. I wait for years, then buy four or five of her books at once.

**Are you a harsh critic of your own work, or do you usually feel quite confident by the time something is published?**

I'm a ruthless editor, more than I am a critic, right up until the day I send the manuscript off to the publisher. Then, I never read the book again, in part because I'm afraid I'll find flaws. I like to think that when I'm really old, I'll reread all of my novels and love them.

**What are your tour plans for the coming year, if any?**

No tour plans at the moment. I started a new business last year, and it's taken off like crazy, so I'm focusing on that right now.