

Indomitable: The Life of Barbara Grier

Joanne Passet

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Always enthusiastic, often imperfect, Grier helped develop and sustain an industry, not just for herself, but for so many others.

Joanne Passet's *Indomitable: The Life of Barbara Grier* presents the life of LGBTQ publishing pioneer Barbara Grier in tandem with the development of the LGBTQ press itself. Passet's choice shows how much she understands the woman at the heart of *Indomitable*—a bibliophile whose passion was her work and work her defining passion. Laid out in unflinching yet surprisingly compassionate prose, this biography portrays a woman who valued, more than anything, written representations of her community.

Grier brashly sought out both women and lesbian literature in the 1940s, a time when such activities were illegal. She soon realized her formative experiences as an out lesbian—often so counter to the closeted women she would meet—were unique. This realization led Grier to believe literary representation was a potent key to validation.

Always a voracious reader, in the 1950s she began collecting everything related to lesbian publishing that she could find, eventually amassing more than 15,000 books as part of a collection that expanded over time to include a wide range of LGBTQ literature, correspondence, periodicals, and journals. Collecting introduced Grier to the early gay and lesbian press, first as a newsletter subscriber and frequent letter-writer, then as a columnist, writer, and reviewer, and, finally, as the dynamic force behind Naiad Books.

Passet's easy, accessible style belies the completeness and rigor of her research. She depicts Grier as a complex, often controversial figure who possessed strong, sometimes ruthless focus. It's obvious how completely literature and lesbianism defined Grier, so, it's fascinating, though not terribly surprising, how deeply the field of LGBTQ publishing bears her stamp.

Always enthusiastic, often imperfect, Grier helped develop and sustain an industry, not just for herself, but for so many others. The combination makes *Indomitable* a fascinating, must-read addition to the genre.

LETITIA MONTGOMERY-RODGERS (LGBTQ+ 2017)

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