

# The Lesbian Poets of Headmistress Press: Ann Tweedy and G.L. Morrison in Conversation

June 21, 2018 by [Headmistress Press](#) and [Mary Meriam](#) | [1 Comment](#)

*There are many things you don't know about lesbian poets. The poetry establishment—major literary journals, male poets, poetry professors—cannot hear, see, recognize or value lesbian poetry. Lesbian poetry is largely ignored. Headmistress Press is determined to make a change in this status quo. In this special Ms. series, the brilliant, lively, lesbian poets of Headmistress Press are bringing you their conversations with each other, in a sort of online lesbian poetry conference. Previously, [Jessica K. Hylton and Jen Rouse](#), [Joy Ladin and Risa Denenberg](#), [Gail Thomas and Lesléa Newman](#), [Marissa Higgins and Samantha Pious](#), [Robin Reagler and Diane Furtney](#), [Laura Foley and Maureen Bocka](#), [Freesia McKee and Farrell Greenwald Brenner](#), [Carolyn Boll and Ruth Lehrer](#), and [Wendy DeGroat and Amy Lauren](#) conversed.*

This week, [Ann Tweedy](#) interviews [G.L. Morrison](#) about her book, *Chiaroscuro Kisses* and Morrison interviews Tweedy about her book, *The Body's Alphabet*. Their conversation took place on the phone.

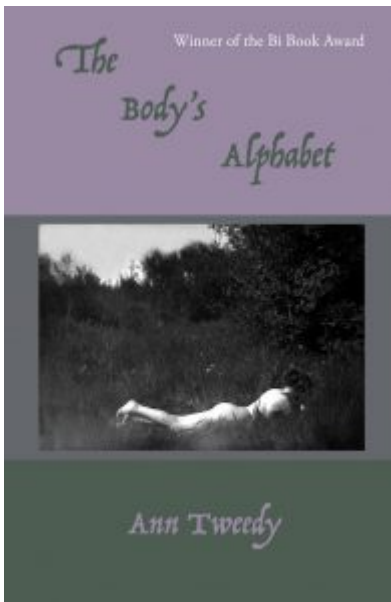


Ann Tweedy by Efrain John Gonzalez / GL Morrison by Tee Corinne

**Morrison:** How did you come up with your title, *The Body's Alphabet*?

**Tweedy:** I'm interested in the supposed dichotomy between the mind and the body, which seems false to me. And yet, even though it seems false, that notion is really ingrained and it's hard to root it out from my thinking. I was thinking about the body's relationship to the world and I thought about trying to have physicality in each of the sections of the book. So the family section is the body's relationship to the family, and then the romantic relationships, and the parenting relationships, and the body's relationship to nature. And then there's a section about larger stories that aren't just focused on me. But I was thinking about physicality in those, too.

**Morrison:** Has poetry come to you as a friend, a protector, a tormentor, a confidante, a teacher?



**Tweedy:** I turn to reading when I'm going through difficult things, so in terms of reading poetry, it's a friend. I think writing makes me feel more sane and it helps me process things to turn them into poetry, and so then there's all of the craft mixed in with the story and it's comforting to be somewhat in control of the story. I guess I could see it as a confidant in that I feel like I share my deepest self in writing poetry.

**Morrison:** What truths are easier to tell in poetry, and which are harder for you?

**Tweedy:** I think emotional truths are easier, because you have the feeling driving the writing, and the intensity of that makes for good poetry. Intellectual truths and political truths are harder because you need the immediacy to make the poem work, and that can be hard, with those sorts of truths.

**Morrison:** Do you personify poetry? Do you see it as a thing? Is it more an activity? Or a being?

**Tweedy:** I feel like it's sort of divine. Sometimes, not very often, I'll have a poem just come to me, and it's as if it's coming through me, so I feel like it's not just, you know, an activity that I'm doing, that somehow there's more to it than that.

**Morrison:** What age were you when poetry found you?

**Tweedy:** My mother used to read me poetry when I was little. And I remember in seventh grade feeling like I was connecting with Robert Frost, so I think poetry became important to me around age 12. I found a poem that I wrote when I was really young, it was just a simple poem, something like, *Barbie looked into the mirror to find Barbie there, but Barbie wasn't there.* It was interesting to me because I'm shy and often feel invisible. How did you come to writing poetry?

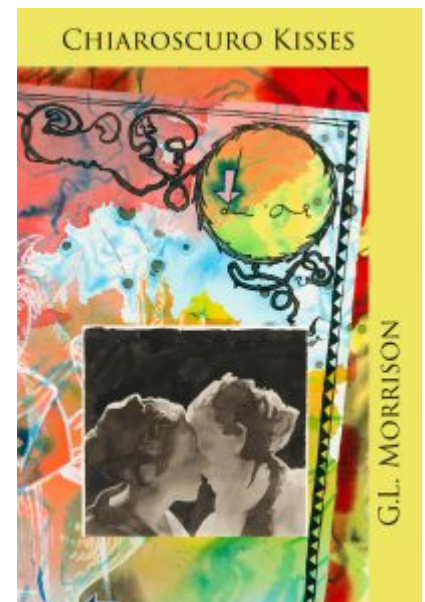
**Morrison:** As soon as I found words, I was in love with them, and just started to collect them like wild. I was writing poetry very young, and it all rhymed and the cadence was really tight, too.

**Tweedy:** I noticed many of the poems in *Chiaroscuro Kisses* are about relationships.

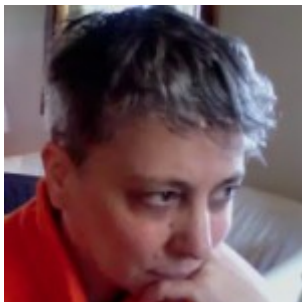
**Morrison:** My poems about relationships are really in some ways poems about poetry. They're about passion and about how language can be passionate. My relationship with poetry is pretty fluid. At certain times, it's been my primary relationship. I think poetry is a way to engage people both emotionally and intellectually simultaneously. If you can give people a tool that then they can pass on, it can be more revolutionary and more likely to change people at the core than a rational discussion.

Poems are fascinating bits of tools and bits of jewelry. They are fun, they are ornamental, but they also are essential. They are necessary and in some places desperately needed. To recognize this is cool, to be able to hand somebody a poem like you'd hand them a hammer or 20 bucks and say, "I hope this helps." I think it is not only powerful but our responsibility as poets.

Almost everything we know about past history has come to us through poets. The Greek poets kind of fed us the world. If you are an academic poet who is interested in the canon of poetic history and how to be a part of that, and you want to be remembered in talks in schools or at least in a footnote, then do your research. Make sure that you understand what the canon includes. And if poetry is a therapeutic tool for you, then go to open mics or find



support groups around particular topics and share your poetry and stuff there. But understand that poetry isn't one tool. It's many tools.



**Mary Meriam** advocates for the right of women to love each other in their poetry and art, and strives to give their work a place at the table. She writes about and publishes such work in the journal she founded, **Lavender Review**, at the press she cofounded, **Headmistress Press**, and at Ms. magazine, **The Critical Flame** and The Gay & Lesbian Review. Her poetry collections, *The Countess of Flatbroke*, *The Poet's Zodiac*, *The Lillian Trilogy* and *Lady of the Moon*, honor a cosmos of strong, creative women.



**Headmistress Press** publishes books of poetry by lesbians, *Lesbian Poet Trading Cards* and **Lavender Review**. Their definition of "lesbian" includes both women who identify as lesbians and people who identify with lesbians, recognizing that lesbian communities have been and continue to be informed by bi women, trans women, Two Spirit, genderqueer, gender non-conforming and non-binary people, and that many of these labels are not mutually exclusive categories. In that spirit, they welcome submissions from all poets who feel an intimate connection with the term "lesbian." **They will be accepting submissions for the annual**

**Charlotte Mew Chapbook Contest from May 4 to July 4, 2018.**