



The Naiad Press: Tallahassee's Lesbian Feminist Publishing Company



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Abstract

In a period of social uproar, students and scholars alike are looking to revisit the past, uncovering histories of minority groups and recognizing the proportion of events and details hidden from the pages of history books. One such history remains largely unrecognized within the Florida State University student body, and broader Tallahassee community, despite its significance at the time in which it existed. The Naiad Press, the nation's largest and longest running lesbian feminist publishing company, was based out of Tallahassee from 1980-2003. Through a study of and participation in developing LGBTQ+ oral history, we have accumulated personal stories of various women who have worked under or been published by the Press. Through transcribing these interviews and visiting the San Francisco Public Library Archives, I have worked to collect information regarding the Press and lesbian community within Tallahassee at the time. In an effort to bring this local history to the foreground, not only in efforts to inspire the current lesbian community within Tallahassee, but to inform the population as a whole, we are working to curate a museum exhibit at the FSU Museum of Fine Arts from June 9 to October 29. We hope these efforts will raise awareness for and honor an obscured Tallahassee story.

Introduction

Unknown to many current Florida State University students, there was a time when some would refer to Tallahassee as the "San Francisco of the South" (McDonald). From 1980 to 2003, the Naiad Press, the nation's largest and longest-running lesbian feminist publishing company, was based out of Tallahassee. Central in influence to the surrounding area's LGBTQ+ community, as well as publishing works known not only nationally but globally, the company left a lasting influence on lesbian literature, as well as the lives of many who read books by, were employed by, and were supported by Naiad Press. There is therefore a benefit to bringing back a history that has often been purposely disregarded, forgotten, and gentrified. In an effort to make this history known, a museum exhibit at FSU's Museum of Fine Arts will be prepared for the student body and broader Tallahassee community.

Methods

- In order to prepare for a museum exhibit about the Naiad Press:
 - Transcribe numerous interviews with authors published by and those employed by the Press
 - Take into account the differences between LGBTQ+ oral history work, vs general oral history work, due to emphasized ethical, political, and academic contexts
 - Consider the impact of and methods through which the exhibit should most responsibly display an often overlooked history to the general public (primarily the Florida State University student body and faculty), when it has previously been a history shared and studied mainly within the LGBTQ+ community.
 - Visit the San Francisco Public Library to conduct archival work relating to items desired for the physical exhibition space, including requesting scans of photos and noting items for lending, such as T Shirts, banners, catalogs, posters, newspaper clippings, etc.

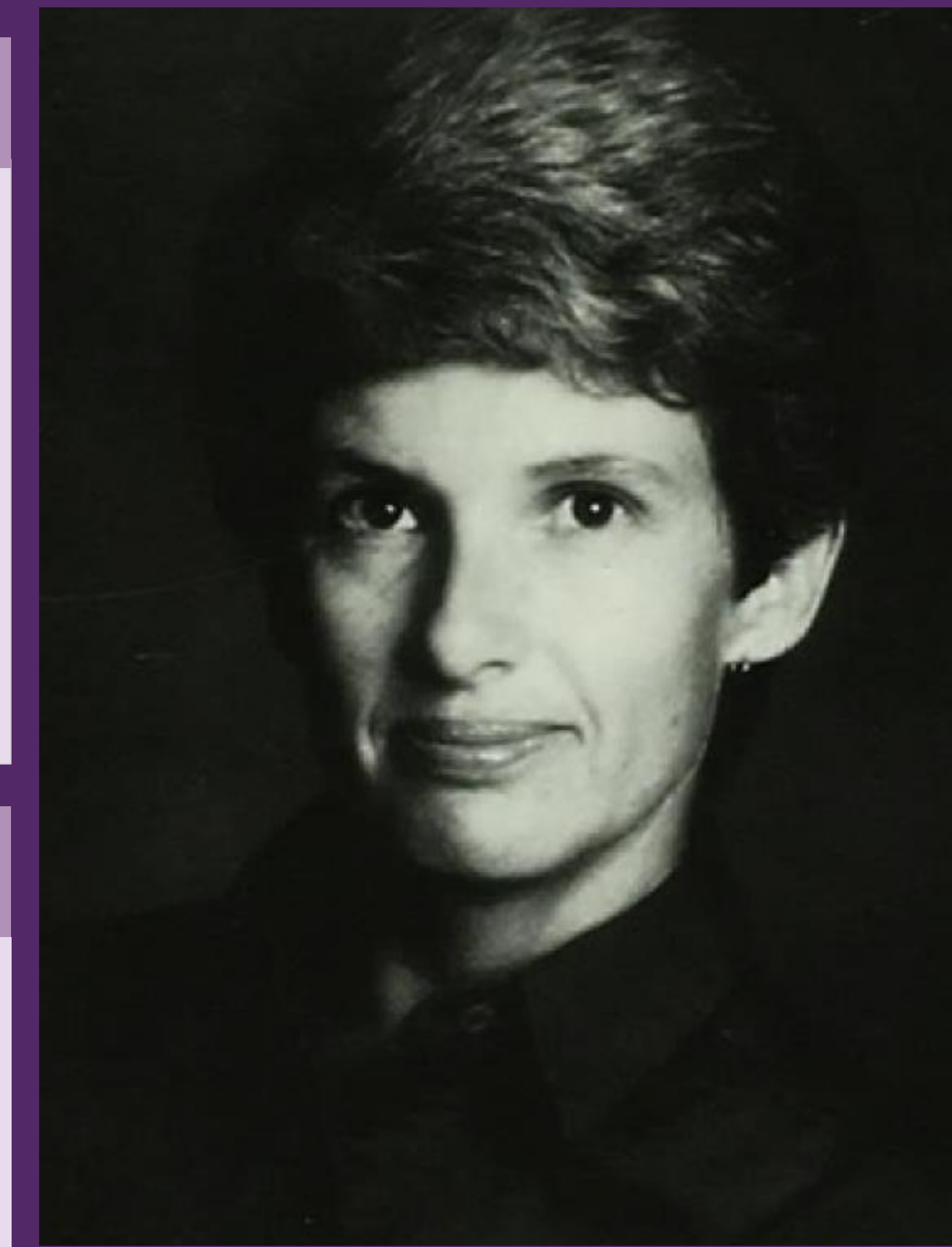
"Naiad Press was one of the pioneers and I think it's regarded as that by many people, writers and readers alike." –Sheila Ortiz Taylor

Limitations

- In uncovering the history of a marginalized community within Tallahassee, it is essential to maintain an intersectional approach to such research
 - Unfortunately, most of our interviewees have been white lesbians, resulting in our lack of information regarding the unique experiences of lesbians of color within Tallahassee and the Naiad Press
 - From the input of Sheila Ortiz-Taylor, a former FSU English professor and Chicana lesbian author published by the Naiad Press, the Press largely ignored (but simultaneously were not "bothered by") her Chicana heritage, and throughout her time in Tallahassee people often would perceive her as either Chicana or lesbian, rather than both as a combined identity

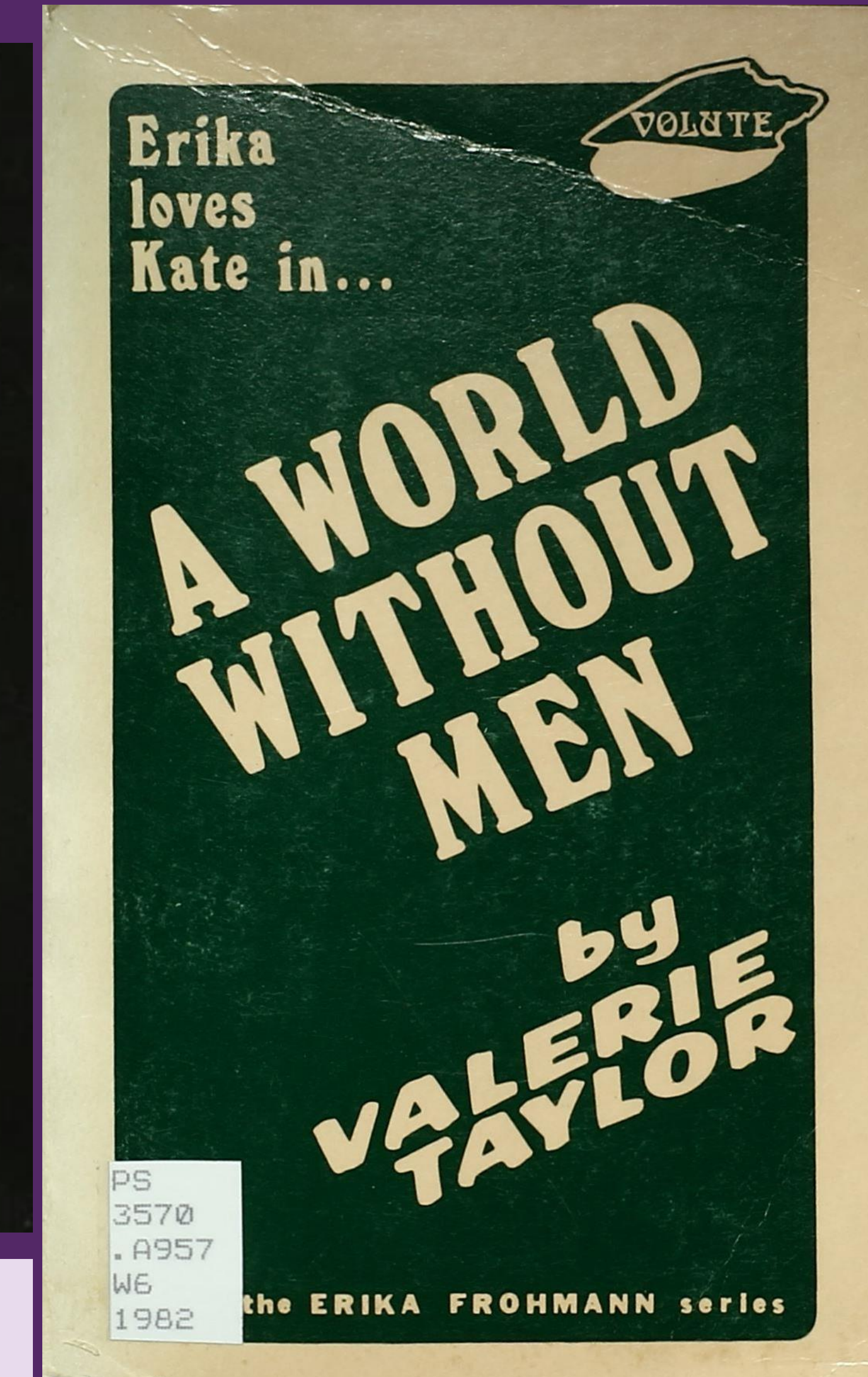
Results

The most observable end to such effort will be a museum exhibit on the Naiad Press, at the FSU Museum of Fine Arts from June 9 to October 29. The museum exhibit will seek to educate the student body and broader Tallahassee community of an often obscured local history. Sound bites will be taken from the interviews that have been transcribed, in order to physically display quotes on the walls, or to have selected clips played through headsets positioned throughout the exhibit. Photos, T-shirts, catalogs, and other items collected from the San Francisco Public Library archives, will also be put on display for viewing and interacting with. Books will be available for lending, in an effort to create a similar sense of community and discovery through literature that inspired the Naiad Press and its women. The exhibit will contribute to a broader goal within LGBTQ+ Oral History practices—to amplify the stories that have historically been suppressed.

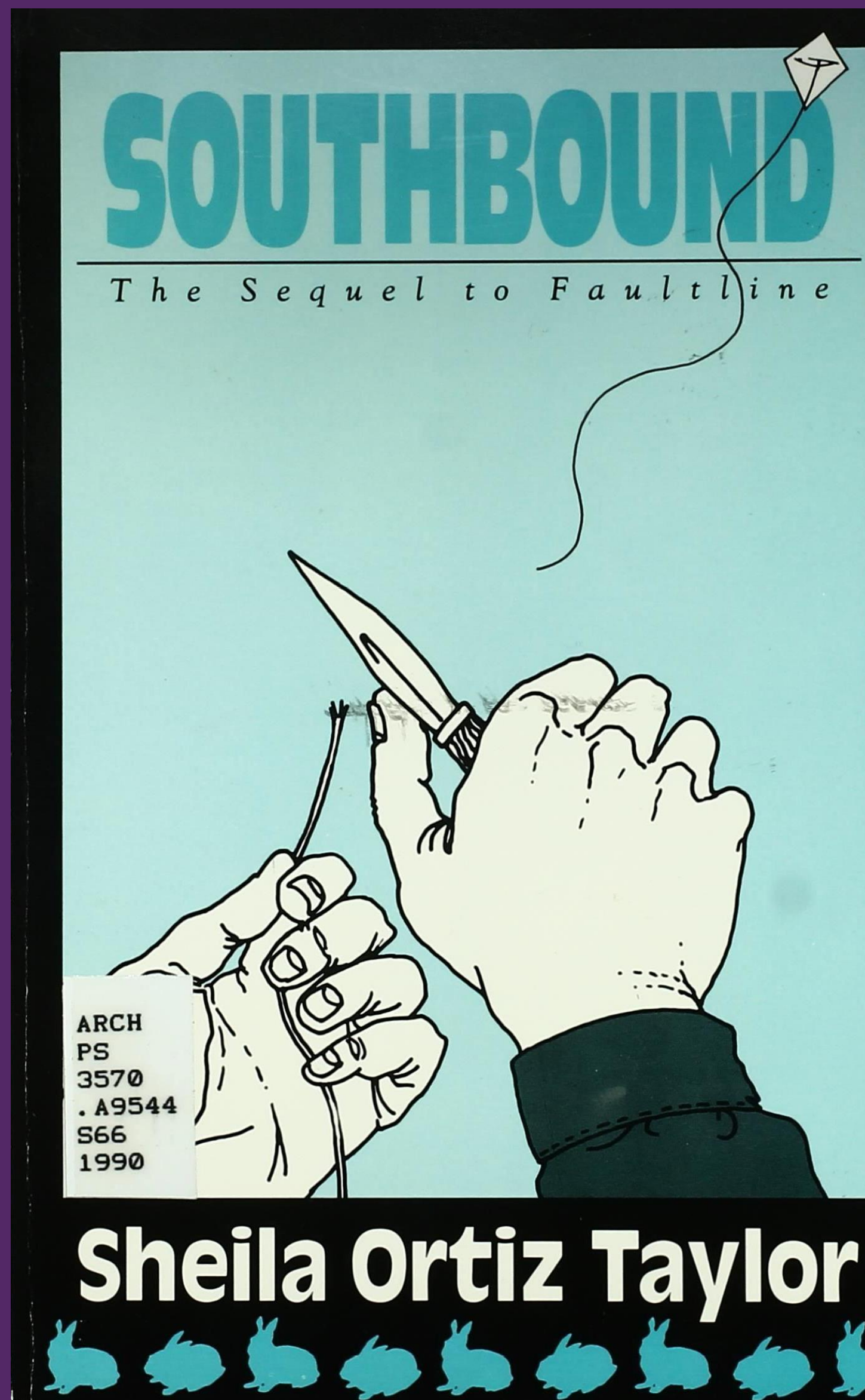


Taylor, Sheila Ortiz. From the cover of *Southbound the Sequel to Faultline*. 1st ed. Tallahassee, Fla: Naiad Press, 1990. Print. Courtesy of the Florida State University Libraries, Special Collections and Archives

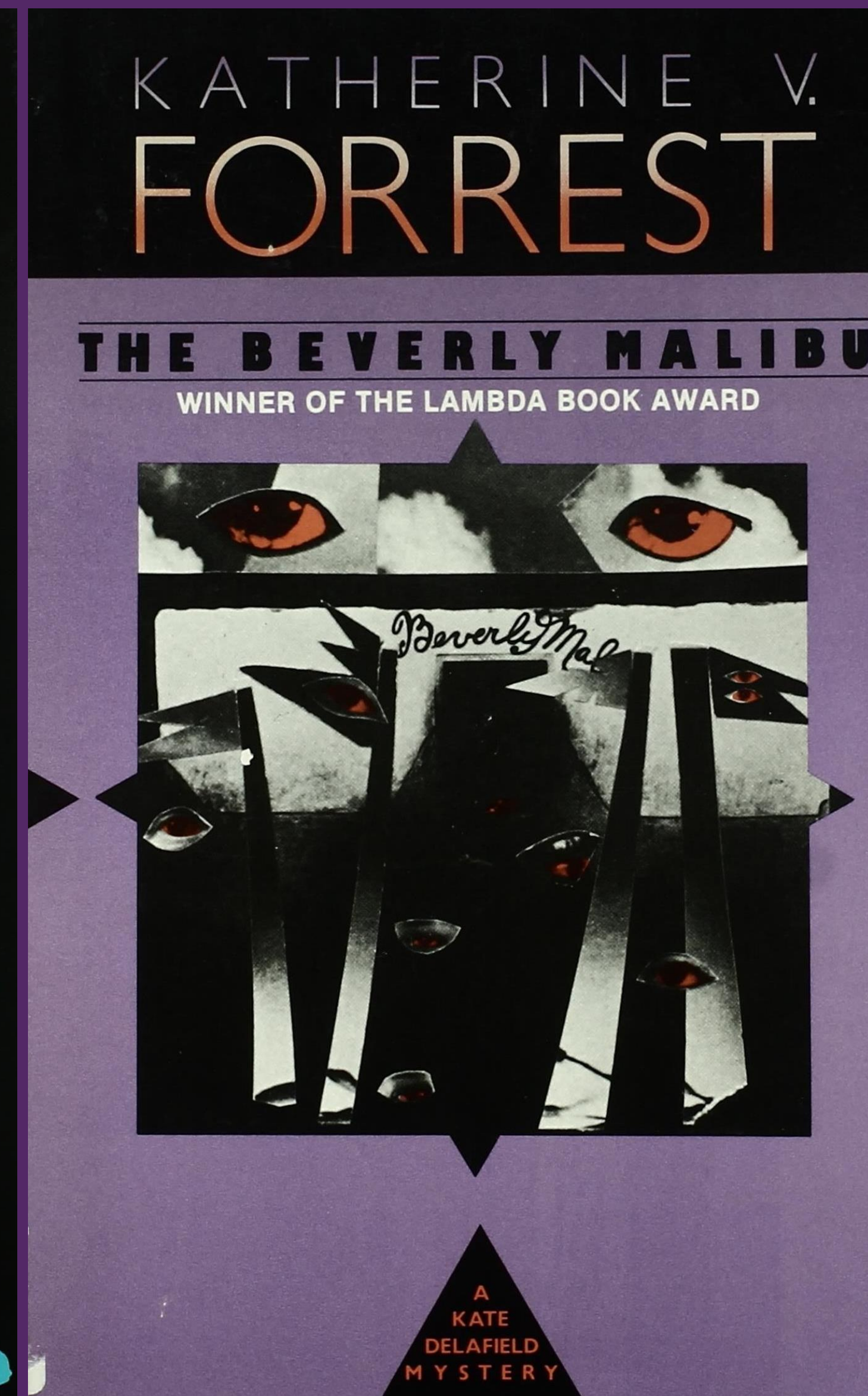
Naiad Press Logo




Taylor, Valerie. *A World Without Men*. Tallahassee, FL: Naiad Press, 1982. Print. Courtesy of the Florida State University Libraries, General Collections.



Taylor, Sheila Ortiz. *Southbound the Sequel to Faultline*. 1st ed. Tallahassee, Fla: Naiad Press, 1990. Print. Courtesy of the Florida State University Libraries, Special Collections and Archives



Forrest, Katherine V. *The Beverly Malibu*. Tallahassee, FL: Naiad Press, 1991. Print. Courtesy of the Florida State University Libraries, General Collections.



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