

pregnancy and the birth of her daughter. Yet rather than a straightforward journalistic account, the book considers questions of narrative form and the fragmented quality of diaries themselves, exploring reproduction as metaphor for narrative, and narrative as metaphor for reproduction. Her book on Mexican painter Frida Kahlo, *Beauty Is Convulsive* (2002), brings together poetry, diary, and criticism as an homage to Kahlo and consideration of feminist/female artistic production. Influenced by feminist writers and thinkers including Virginia Woolf, Hélène Cixous, Julia Kristeva, and Nathalie Sarraute, Maso defines one of her major projects as locating a space for female experience in writing.

The winner of a Lannan Literary Fellowship for fiction, Maso is currently professor of literary arts at Brown University. She continues to work on the triptych *The Bay of Angels*, of which *AVA* is a part.

SEE ALSO: Gender and the Novel (AF); Postmodernist Fiction (AF); Woolf, Virginia (BIF)

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Mathews, Harry

DAVID W. MADDEN

Harry Mathews is a remarkably versatile writer in a range of genres — novels, short stories, poetry, essays, translations, and memoir. He has written complex, challenging metafiction, and though he rejects the label, his works have been in the vanguard of American postmodernism.

Harry Mathews was born February 14, 1930 in New York City and attended exclusive schools, including Princeton, which he left his sophomore year to join the Navy. He received his BA from Harvard University in 1952 and immigrated to Europe, spending most of his time in Paris, where he joined a number of avant garde writers and became the only American admitted to the French literary society, Oulipo.

His first novel, *The Conversations* (1962), begins with an air of mystery as an unnamed narrator is invited to a wealthy scion's mansion and challenged to interpret the engravings on an ancient adze, which he wins after a bizarre contest. A day or so later, the scion dies and bequeaths all his estate to the holder of the adze who must solve three riddles. The bulk of the novel is taken up by the narrator's complicated search for answers and ultimate frustration that the entire enterprise may have been a ruse. More important is the novel's construction, which relies on metafictional forays through letters, documents, paintings, films, and stories within stories.

Tooth (1966) also involves quests and journeys and likewise centers on an ambiguous narrator, who the reader assumes is male but is eventually revealed to be a woman who is incarcerated in a Russian prison and plots the assassination of Evelyn Roak, a surgeon who has mistakenly amputated some of the violinist—narrator's fingers. After international travels and numerous fictional digressions, the narrator catches up with Roak, discovers she has a fatal disease, and allows fate to take its course.

Where the first two novels experimented with the detective and picaresque genres, *The Sinking of the Odradek Stadium* (1975) is an epistolary exchange between a pair of lovers, Zachary McCaltex and Twang, his Asian wife. Once again a byzantine plot revolves around discovery of a hidden treasure that takes the protagonists around the world and leads to what appears to be the dissolution of their relationship. As in his other novels, this work concludes elliptically. The emphasis in all three novels on puzzles and games is reminiscent of Vladimir Nabokov's elaborate verbal stratagems, and the incorporation of actual and invented history parallels the experiments of Thomas Pynchon.

Cigarettes (1988a) revolves around another puzzle as a group of characters move in and out of the life of a woman named Elizabeth, the subject of a destroyed portrait that exists only as a copy. The novel shuttles back and forth between the pre- and postwar years of the well-heeled and unscrupulous in New York. While narrators in the first three novels occupy the center of narrative attention, neither *Cigarettes'* narrator, Lewis Lewison, nor any other character can be described as the center or protagonist, thus Mathews challenges a central tenet of most fictions. The novel further extends his use of stories within stories and narrative fragments to decenter the reader and force more active narrative engagement.

The Journalist (1994) once more revolves around the writings of a subjective narrator, this time a middle-aged man who keeps a journal in which he ponders questions large and small and gradually becomes so immersed in what he hopes is a comprehensive account that he loses touch with any world outside of words. Mathews foregrounds, perhaps more overtly than in any other novel, metafictional concerns as his protagon-

ist obsesses over art, its materials, and its creation. *My Life in CIA: A Chronicle of 1973* (2005) is a fictionalized memoir of what became a fairly widespread suspicion that Mathews himself was a CIA agent. *Semaines du Suzanne* (1997 [1991]), originally published in French, is a novella of which Mathews is one of seven contributors that further underscores the writer's devotion to fragmented fiction and the gamesmanship of narrative composition.

Mathews has been something of a cult favorite to a devoted cadre of readers and been recognized with a National Endowment for the Arts grant for fiction writing (1982) and a National Academy and Institute of Arts and Letters Prize for Fiction (1991). He has taught at Bennington and Hamilton Colleges and Columbia University.

SEE ALSO: The Avant Garde Novel (AF); Nabokov, Vladimir (AF); Postmodernist Fiction (AF)

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Maupin, Armistead

SAMUEL GAUSTAD

Armistead Maupin, an openly gay writer, focuses on realistic portrayals of marginal characters, including gays, lesbians, bisexuals, transsexuals, African Americans, and dwarves. He creates unique non-biological family structures and also attacks hypocrisy by dealing with non-mainstream individuals, deftly intertwining their stories within a larger societal framework. Additionally, Maupin includes references to contemporary settings, current political events, and popular fashions, so that fictional time feels like "real" time. Because of this, his works function as a subtle catalogue of political and popular culture.

Born in Washington, DC on May 13, 1944, Maupin, the eldest of three children, was raised in Raleigh, North Carolina. He attended the University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill, graduating in 1966. Following service in the US Navy, Maupin worked as a journalist for a brief time in South Carolina before relocating to San Francisco as an agency writer for the Associated Press. Maupin's acclaimed *Tales of the City* series was born in San Francisco in 1974, where he lived with his partner and manager, Terry Anderson, for many years, and is currently married to Christopher Turner.

Inspired by the serialized fiction of Charles Dickens, Maupin's first five volumes of the series (*Tales of the City* (1978), *More Tales of the City* (1980), *Further Tales of the City* (1982), *Babycakes*

(1984), and *Significant Others* (1987)) were initially published in the *San Francisco Chronicle* followed by the *San Francisco Examiner*. Subsequently, each volume was published as a novel, beginning in 1978. *Sure of You*, the final volume of the opus, was published as an independent novel in 1989. Set predominantly in San Francisco and functioning as a social history of the city, *Tales* contains several characters who run throughout the series: Michael Tolliver, Anna Madrigal, Mary Ann Singleton, Brian Hawkins, and Mona Ramsey. Each is representative of a different faction: gay, transsexual, female and male heterosexual, and bisexual. Headed by landlady and matriarch Mrs. Madrigal, these characters form the non-biological nuclear family of 28 Barbary Lane, the setting for much of the action of the first three volumes. Anna Madrigal functions as the voice of experience and wisdom throughout the series. Maupin uses Michael as his *raisonneur*, creating a gay Everyman to voice a gay perspective. Of particular importance was Maupin's inclusion of the AIDS epidemic, beginning with *Babycakes*; he was one of the first fiction writers to address the topic openly. In treating the subject, however, Maupin never sentimentalizes or allows his characters to become maudlin. Maupin's attack on Hollywood hypocrisy (forcing gays to stay closeted) is introduced in *Babycakes*, when Michael becomes intimately involved with a closeted film star, referred to only as _____. This plot turn was based on Maupin's involvement with the late Rock Hudson.

In *Maybe the Moon* (1992), Maupin again offered a poignant combination of pathos and wit. His protagonist is a Jewish dwarf, Cadence "Cady" Roth (based on Tamara De Treaux, who appeared in *E.T.: The Extra-Terrestrial*), who struggles as an actress in Hollywood. Once more, Maupin focuses on various marginalized characters, and a strong surrogate family is created. He uses three gay characters, Jeff, Callum, and Leonard, as foils for one another, contrasting gays' means of dealing with the heterosexual mainstream. Maupin again highlights Hollywood's double standards in dealing with those outside the "norm." Callum, as a young film star, remains closeted, while Cady's journal, when turned into a film, is completely altered because of Hollywood's assumption of mainstream audiences' lack of comfort in dealing with dwarves. The result is an account of