



BOOK RELEASE

The Players

By Margaret Sweatman

***“I will be what you like, let you do what you like;
I’ll even like what you do.”***

Fiction
ISBN-10: 0-86492-518-2
ISBN-13: 978-0-86492-518-3
\$22.95 / 332 pp / 5.5 x 8.5/ pb
Pub Date: 4 September 2009

In her provocative, sly, and ever-so modern novel, Margaret Sweatman sweeps into the 17th century in an incendiary exploration of the sexual power between men and women.

It is 1665, and Lilly Cole is sixteen and alone. Her mother has died, and she needs to invent herself. Captured by poverty and rank, she begins by serving ale at her aunt’s tavern and servicing customers for coin — until Bartholomew, an Earl, poet, and a drunk, teaches her stagecraft. Lilly proves to be adept, “a player,” so clever that King Charles II is charmed by her skill and makes her one of his mistresses.

Enter French explorers des Groselliers and Radisson, who also play to the King. They seduce the Court with tales of torture and barbarism, of the riches of the New World. With skilled *legerdemain*, they convince Prince Rupert and the King to back their search for a trade route to Asia, the Northwest Passage. Overnight the world changes.

While these men of rank and importance, with their great faults and desires, plot wealth and dominion, Lilly is sent home like an afterthought. Brave but alone, a forced chance encounter measures her courage and seals her fate. Desperate for freedom and a better life, she stows away on a ship that, she believes, is destined for China.

The Northwest Passage is never found, and Lilly doesn’t make it to China, but she plays the game of sexual politics well, allowing Sweatman to explore the deep well of human motivation and the triumph of instinct over reason. In a novel marked by fluidity and wit, Sweatman gorgeously explores liberty, human motivation, self-interest, and how it is that we might gain advantage and freedom in any situation.

MARGARET SWEATMAN is a novelist, playwright, and lyricist. For her three previous novels, *When Alice Lay Down with Peter*, *Sam and Angie*, and *Fox*, she won the Rogers Writers’ Trust Fiction Prize, the Margaret Laurence Award for Fiction, the Sunburst Award for Canadian Literature of the Fantastic, the Carol Shields Winnipeg Award, and the McNally Robinson Award for Manitoba Book of the Year. At the beginning of her career she won the John Hirsch Award for the most promising Manitoba writer. She performs with the Broken Songs Band and has won a Genie for a song she co-wrote with her husband Glenn Buhr for the film *Seven Times Lucky*. She teaches literature and creative writing at the University of Winnipeg and was the first to hold the Carol Shields writer-in-residence post.

— more —

ACCOLADES FOR *When Alice Lay Down with Peter* (2001)

“This is the best novel on the fall list — a historical saga spanning a century with compelling characters and poetic imagery.” — *Calgary Herald*

“A galloping family epic that’s reined in, but not tamed, by a wry humour. Sweatman teases us, with a wink and a nudge, into going along with her tall tales, and we do go along, because the details she gives root us compellingly in time and place. A rollicking, erotic, magical read.” — Gail Anderson-Dargatz

“Exuberant, generous, magical retelling of Canadian history.” — *Quill and Quire*

"Sweatman's style is loose and poetic. Her elliptical dance through history helps us rescue it from the "boring" academic ghetto to which it was consigned." — Charlotte Gray, *National Post*

“An exuberant romp through history which covers all bases and leaves no stone unturned.”
— *London Free Press*

— 30 —

CONTACT INFORMATION

For review copies, author interviews, or publication excerpts, please contact Susan Baker at sbaker@gooselane.com or call (888) 926.8377.

High-res book cover and author image files are available at www.gooselane.com.