**Sarah Schulman**

Sarah Schulman is an incredibly prolific writer having published 18 books – both fiction and non-fiction, while also working as a playwright, an activist and an educator at the College of Staten Island. She will be our guest writer at the Literature Roundtable this year on March 7th, 2017 from 2:30 to 4:30 pm in the Atrium Amphitheatre (Atrium building, Ground Floor). The main focus of the Roundtable will be her most recent novel: *The Cosmopolitans*. *The Cosmopolitans* is a modern rewriting of Honoré de Balzac’s Cousin Bette (1846) that is equally inspired by James Baldwin’s *Another Country* (1962) and set in late 1950s New York City. Below is information about the author, and a selected reading list of a few of her more notable publications, with brief descriptions.

**About the Author**

Sarah Schulman's love of New York is evident in *The Cosmopolitans*, her 10th novel and 17th book. Distinguished Professor of the Humanities at CUNY, her honors and awards include a Guggenheim in Playwriting and a Fulbright in Judaic Studies. A well known literary chronicler of the marginalized and subcultural, Sarah's fiction has focused on queer urban life for thirty years. Her nonfiction includes *The Gentrification of The Mind*, a memoir of the homogenization of her city in the wake of the AIDS crisis. Her plays and films have been seen at Playwrights Horizons, The Berlin Film Festival and The Museum of Modern Art. An AIDS historian, Sarah is co-founder of the ACT UP Oral History Project. She is on the advisory board of Jewish Voice for Peace and is faculty advisor to Students for Justice in Palestine at the College of Staten Island. (from The Feminist Press*,* publisher of *The Cosmopolitans)*

**Selected Reading List**

**Fiction**

***The Cosmopolitans***(New York: Feminist Press, 2016).

From the Feminist Press: A modern retelling of Balzac's classic Cousin Bette by one of America's most prolific and significant writers. Earl, a black, gay actor working in a meatpacking plant, and Bette, a white secretary, have lived next door to each other in the same Greenwich Village apartment building for thirty years. Shamed and disowned by their families, both found refuge in New York and in their domestic routine. Everything changes when Hortense, a wealthy young actress from Ohio, comes to the city to "make it."

***People in Trouble*** (1990)

From *Publisher’s Weekly:* In a witty, angry and anguished novel, set in an almost-real contemporary New York City, Kate and Molly are having an affair. Kate, an artist, still loves husband Peter and wants the two parts of her love life to somehow peacefully coexist. They won't--Peter feels jealous; Molly, neglected. The triangle is played out as AIDS kills hundreds; homelessness and hunger are as ubiquitous as Ronald Horne, a cold-blooded, homophobic real-estate mogul with political aspirations. At the end of their ropes, the AIDS activists who constitute the group Justice decide that they've got nothing to lose. Molly first, then Kate, become involved in Justice's inventive schemes of civil disobedience (*from Publisher’s Weekly*).

***Girls, Visions and Everything***(1986)

From *Publisher’s Weekly*: Lila Futuransky is a lesbian living on the East Side of New York who admires Jack Kerouac and is determined to emulate her hero. She wanders around the city, takes many lovers, but then she meets Emily. They fall for each other, and soon Lila must choose between her love for Emily and her desire to continue living out her fantasy from On the Road (excerpted From *Publishers Weekly*).

**Non-Fiction**

***Conflict is not Abuse: Overstating Harm, Community Responsibility, and the Duty of Repair* (**Arsenal Pulp Press, 2016)

From the Publisher: From intimate relationships to global politics, Sarah Schulman observes a continuum: that inflated accusations of harm are used to avoid accountability. Illuminating the difference between Conflict and Abuse, Schulman directly addresses our contemporary culture of scapegoating. This deep, brave, and bold work reveals how punishment replaces personal and collective self-criticism, and shows why difference is so often used to justify cruelty and shunning. Rooting the problem of escalation in negative group relationships, Schulman illuminates the ways in which cliques, communities, families, and religious, racial, and national groups bond through the refusal to change their self-concept. She illustrates how Supremacy behaviour and Traumatized behaviour resemble each other, through a shared inability to tolerate difference.

***The Gentrification of the Mind: Witness to a Lost Imagination*** (Oakland, California: University of California Press, 2012)

From the Publisher: In this gripping memoir of the AIDS years (1981–1996), Sarah Schulman recalls how much of the rebellious queer culture, cheap rents, and a vibrant downtown arts movement vanished almost overnight to be replaced by gay conservative spokespeople and mainstream consumerism. Schulman takes us back to her Lower East Side and brings it to life, filling these pages with vivid memories of her avant-garde queer friends and dramatically recreating the early years of the AIDS crisis as experienced by a political insider. Interweaving personal reminiscence with cogent analysis, Schulman details her experience as a witness to the loss of a generation’s imagination and the consequences of that loss.

*Stagetruck: Theater, AIDS, and the Marketing of Gay America* (Durham, NC: Duke University Press, 1998)

From the Publisher: In *Stagestruck* noted novelist and outspoken critic Sarah Schulman offers an account of her growing awareness of the startling similarities between her novel *People in Trouble* and the smash Broadway hit *Rent*. Written with a powerful and personal voice, Schulman’s book is part gossipy narrative, part behind-the-scenes glimpse into the New York theater culture, and part polemic on how mainstream artists co-opt the work of “marginal” artists to give an air of diversity and authenticity to their own work. Rising above the details of her own case, Schulman boldly uses her suspicions of copyright infringement as an opportunity to initiate a larger conversation on how AIDS and gay experience are being represented in American art and commerce

*My American History: Lesbian and*[*Gay*](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Gay)*Life During the*[*Reagan*](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Ronald_Reagan)*/*[*Bush*](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/George_H._W._Bush)*Years* (1994)

From the publisher: My American History documents the imagination and expectations of activists as they struggled, against impossible odds and growing opposition, to articulate a movement for freedom and dignity during the Reagan/Bush years. My American History also includes the Lesbian Avengers Handbook, written by Schulman and other members of the Lesbian Avengers, a direct action political group. The Handbook is both a practical guide to direct political action as well as a document of the new lesbian activism.