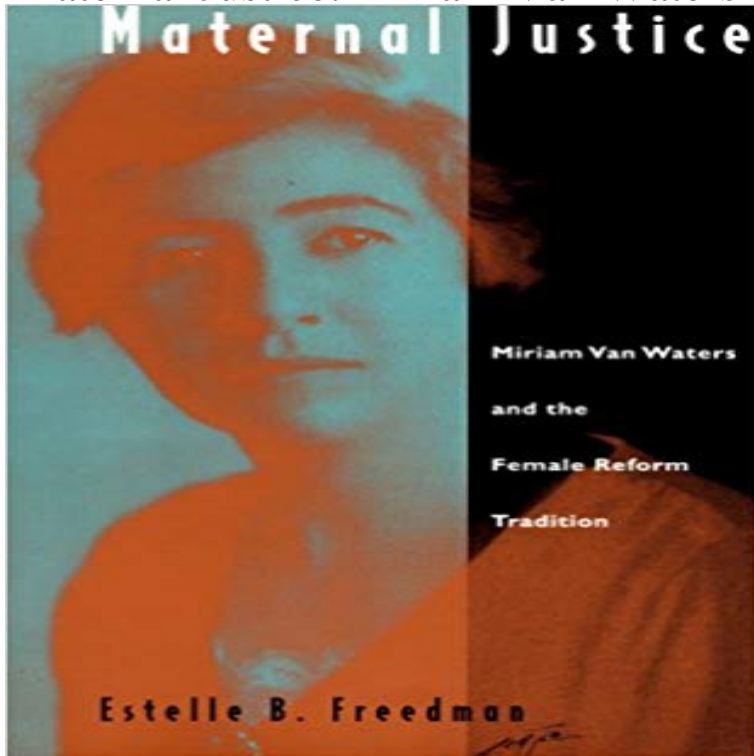


## Maternal Justice: Miriam Van Waters and the Female Reform Tradition



Celebrated prison reformer Miriam Van Waters made history for her sensational battle to retain the superintendency of the Massachusetts Reformatory for Women in 1949. *Maternal Justice* provides a compelling biography of this early lesbian activist by moving beyond the controversy to tell the story of a remarkable woman whose success rested upon the power of her own charismatic leadership. Estelle B. Freedman draws from Van Waters's diaries, letters, and personal papers to recreate her complex personal life, unveiling the disparity between Van Waters's public persona and her agonized private soul. With the power and elegance of a novel, *Maternal Justice* illuminates this historical context, casting light on the social welfare tradition, on women's history, on the American feminist movement, and on the history of sexuality. *Maternal Justice* is as much a work of history as it is biography, bringing to life not only a remarkable woman but also the complex political and social milieu within which she worked and lived. Kelleher Jewett, *The Nation* This sympathetic biography reclaims Van Waters for history. Publishers Weekly The Van Waters legacy, as Freedman gracefully presents, is that she cared about the lives of women behind bars. It is a strikingly unfashionable sentiment today. Jane Meredith Adams, *San Francisco Chronicle Book Review*, Editors Recommended Selection This finely crafted biography is both an engrossing read and a richly complicated account of a reformer whose work ... bridged the eras of voluntarist charitable activism and professional social service. Sherri Broder, *Womens Review of Books* This is a sympathetic, highly personal biography, revealing of both the author's responses to her subject's life and, in considerable detail, Van Waters's family traumas, illnesses, and love affairs. Elizabeth Israel's Perry, *Journal of American History*

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