

**Queer be Dragons: Mapping LGBT Fantasy Novels  
1987-2000**

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Submitted for the degree of PhD

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2016



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Initial submission: 28 August 2015

Final submission: 5 February 2016



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## Summary

Fantasy, considered as a genre, is an ideal space to represent the queer, strange, and different in ways that attract both a readership of enjoyment and the academic critic. It should therefore be well-placed to include and represent lesbian, gay, bisexual, and transgender (LGBT) characters, who often lie outside and transgress against accepted heterosexual cultural norms. Despite its evident potential for such work, fantasy is frequently considered to be a conservative, patriarchal, and sometimes homophobic genre. In the 1980s and 1990s there was a vast increase in LGBT representation in all genres of speculative fiction, including fantasy, but this increased presence did not change the genre's essential tendency to encourage queer representation in theory but to eschew or marginalise it in practice by consistently presenting heteronormative contexts. This neglect of LGBT fantasy is reinforced by a dearth of academic engagement with the topic, despite the extensive work done on related genres such as LGBT/queer science fiction. This thesis addresses that tension between potential and practice by positing the emergence of a new genre of LGBT fantasy during the period 1987-2000, identifiable within, yet separate from, the broader fantasy genre and defined by the presence of LGBT characters in primary roles. Drawing from previous attempts to catalogue and categorise this material, in particular Eric Garber and Lyn Paleo's 1983/1990 bibliography *Uranian Worlds*, the goal of this research was to uncover, establish, and analyse a comprehensive novelistic canon for the emergent genre of LGBT fantasy in this period.

The first chapter of the thesis sets out the historical and theoretical context of the fantasy genre and its potential for queer representation; it assesses the lack of critical work in the area; it argues for the creation of an LGBT fantasy canon through genre theory; finally, it examines how a queer theory approach can work with genre theory to assist the formation of a canon.

The second chapter deals with the practicalities and difficulties of uncovering and defining a canon for a hidden genre. It chronicles the development of a rigorous methodology for locating the primary texts of LGBT fantasy from a wide variety of secondary sources, including book reviews, fan-created lists, and award nominations, while exploring the assumptions, theoretical complexities, and methodological decisions it was necessary to

navigate in so doing. It discusses the process of compiling a longlist of 377 novels, winnowing it to a reading list of 143, and reducing it to a final shortlist of 107. Lastly, it presents the statistical data regarding the utility of the secondary sources and conducts an effectiveness test of the methodology, which is shown to be both comprehensive in its results and more effective than the methods used to compile *Uranian Worlds*.

The third chapter sets out the coding and classificatory methods used to categorise the 107 shortlisted texts. It then presents these texts as a collected and comprehensive canon of the LGBT fantasy genre for the period 1987-2000, organised as a database and incorporating detailed textual analyses derived from close-reading.

The fourth chapter explores broader emergent trends of representation in the collected literature, beginning with a discussion of how lesbian, gay, bisexual, and transgender characters, and their relationships, are presented within the genre. It then presents a detailed case study of the two most significant influences within LGBT fantasy of the time period: coming out and AIDS.

Finally, the conclusion to the thesis examines the nature of the genre of LGBT fantasy itself, as revealed in its textual canon and how it conforms to genre theory: the tensions present within it, the shapes it takes, and the desires it expresses. It ends with a reflection on the research itself, the insights derived from the process, and the potential for future research on the genre of LGBT fantasy.

## Acknowledgements

I am deeply indebted to more people than I can name, but I shall try.

To Helen Conrad-O'Briain, who has been the supervisor and mentor I didn't deserve but always needed and wanted. It has been an honour to be your apprentice.

To Ewan Douglas, who understands the stresses of doctoral research all too well.

To Alex Altman, who somehow lived with me while I wrote up.

To my parents, who have done more for me than I can ever say.

To Aidan Marsh, Frances McQuillan, Aoife Brown, and many others for your support.

To Jarys Maragopoulos, for first showing me how the queer can intersect one's own life.

To the wider Irish gaming community, for being such a welcoming space.

To my colleagues at the School of English for humour and a listening ear.

To Eric Garber and Lyn Paleo, for going first.

I am grateful for funding from the Irish Research Council, the Canadian Studies Travel Scholarship, and the Trinity College Foundation Scholarship: I could not have performed this research without that support.

I cannot adequately express my debt to the staff of the Merril Collection in Toronto: they are the best support a scholar could ever have wished for.

Finally, I am grateful to the authors who created the novels I worked with and the readers who engaged with them so powerfully. This literature means a great deal to me, and always will. Thank you from the bottom of my heart.



# Chapter One – Theoretical Context and Goals

## *Overview*

Fantasy is fundamentally focused on the strange and different: it is the literature of ‘what-if?’. Issues of identity, and of construction of identity, are likewise central to fantasy. Fantasy thus appears to be an ideal space for exploring queer themes, being described by Jes Batts as ‘already manifestly queer’ (2007, p.260). Despite the implication that fantasy is a free and open space for LGBT and queer representation, a tension exists in mainstream fantasy between what Brian Attebery termed ‘the potentially disruptive nature of the fantastic’ (1992, p.67) and a persistent conservatism and reluctance to embrace the queer in the actual genre. Wendy Pearson (1999), although writing about science fiction, fantasy’s sibling, describes this trend exactly:

On the one hand, there is the particular aptness of sf, as a non-mimetic form of writing, to produce stories in which sexuality does not need to be understood in ways “vouched for by human senses and common sense” and to interrogate the ways in which sexual subjectivities are created as effects of the system that sustains them. On the other hand, there are also the variety of ways in which most sf texts, regardless of their identification as “estranged fictions,” are completely unselfconscious in their reproduction of the heteronormative environment in which they were written. (p.18)

Veronica Hollinger (1999) puts it even more bluntly: science fiction ‘is, in spite of its promotion as the literature of change, in many ways a deeply conservative genre which, for the most part, demonstrates an unquestioned allegiance to heteronormative sexual relations and to the limiting gender distinctions that are one of the results of this heteronormativity’. Batts (2007) explicitly extends this criticism to fantasy fiction: ‘Fantasy provides a realm where same-sex relations can be presented uniquely and provocatively ... But those same realms ... can also merely recapitulate homophobic and patriarchal tenets.’ The fantasy genre, then, has the *capacity* for LGBT and queer stories and characters, just as science fiction does, but has frequently eschewed or marginalised them in practice.

Despite this marginalisation within the larger genre of fantasy, LGBT fantasy exists and

has done so for decades. It has been a consistent, marginal, and often hidden presence within the genre. In an effort not only to counteract these trends but also to examine the potential that may be concealed within such literature, this chapter will argue that LGBT fantasy deserves to be considered a genre in its own right.

Drawing on a genre theory approach with elements of queer theory, this chapter will:

Examine the queer history and potential of the fantasy genre;

Explore the lack of queer fantasy criticism and how it demonstrates the need for a new genre of LGBT fantasy;

Set out the genre theory approach to establishing LGBT fantasy through uncovering its canon;

Explain how queer theory can be of benefit to this approach despite its opposition to genre.

After having shown the need for an LGBT fantasy genre, the remaining chapters of this thesis will show how this research has met that need by exhaustively uncovering, chronicling, and classifying a comprehensive canon of LGBT fantasy novels. The second chapter will chronicle the methodological work of researching and assembling this LGBT fantasy genre canon. The third chapter will classify and present this formerly hidden literature with detailed analysis of each text's LGBT representation. Lastly, the fourth chapter will examine the uncovered genre's representative trends and unique elements.

## *Fantasy's queer history and potential*

Fantasy has been described as an impulse, a mode, a formula, and a genre. Its nature is to resist definition: in fact, Rosemary Jackson argues that 'the "value" of fantasy has seemed to reside in precisely this resistance to definition' (1981, p.1). As literature, it arose in the mid-19<sup>th</sup> century and proceeded towards codification as a genre in the early- to mid-20<sup>th</sup> century. However, its roots reach further back than its relatively recent emergence as a genre suggests. Leila Rupp, in *A Desired Past*, described history as 'a story as best as we can tell it' (1999, p.13). This seems appropriate to bear in mind when discussing the history of the fantasy genre: if the development of fantasy is itself a story, and certainly it is based on story, then the way in which it is told will be integral to fantasy's definition, as we are telling a story *of* stories. In this section, therefore, that story will be told with the intent of establishing a working definition of the fantasy genre, and to show that fantasy's complex history is inextricably linked to its occasionally problematic definition. Ultimately the goal is to explore and historicise fantasy's implicit queerness as a genre.

Kathryn Hume claimed that 'If the non-real is your focus, you have no stable point of reference, and the individuality of each departure from reality, each creation of something new, renders chronology largely irrelevant.' (1984, p.xii) Without going that far, it can be useful to explore texts from different periods in one another's contexts, and in the larger context of fantasy as a whole. Therefore although texts may be examined outside of their strict chronological order, this is with the overall intent of exploring the genre's historical development and the inherent queerness coded therein.

The roots of fantasy are in myth and folktale: these forms contained and evoked the supernatural; they reified the power of narrative and story to explain, define, and create human experience. They provided explanations for natural phenomena, defined what was culturally appropriate or forbidden, and enabled the formation of tribal, cultural, and individual identities. Therefore Elizabeth Baeten described myth as 'the backbone of culture, the fundamental means by which human beings demarcate, that is to say, create, human being' (1996, p.20). The word 'demarcate' is important here – according to Baeten, the purpose of myth is to set up opposed categories of meaning such as clean/unclean, forbidden/permitted, and our tribe/not our tribe. These definitions or demarcations are necessarily dependent on categorisation and exclusion: for *this* to be sacred, *that* must be

profane.

The first problem of definition arises in this case – how does one categorise and define myth itself? Glen Bowersock (1994), in his discussion of Greek and Roman myth (revealingly titled *Fiction as History*) noted that in the early Christian era:

local marvels [...] merged into an international conglomerate of fantasy and the supernatural. History was being rewritten all over again; even the mythic past was being rewritten, and the present was awash in so many miracles and marvels that not even the credulous or the pious could swallow them all. (p.2)

Myth and folktale, according to Bowersock, have the potential to overlap to such a degree that not only can they be indistinguishable, but one can rewrite the other. This makes it almost impossible to unproblematically categorise a tale as myth or as folktale, as one person's folktale has the potential to become another person's myth and vice versa. Italo Calvino (1975) describes the emergence of myth from folktale as follows: the tribal storyteller 'goes on permutating jaguars and toucans until there comes a moment when one of his innocent little stories explodes into a terrible revelation: a myth, which demands to be recited in secret and in a sacred place' (p.81).

This sacred element of myth is integral both to exploring what myth is, and to understanding why it is so resistant to definition. Arguably, in order to incorporate sacred elements and mysteries, it was necessary for myth on some level to be undefinable, either as to content or as to form. Myth therefore resists definition to the same degree that it resists categorisation: Joseph Strelka (1980) said 'there exists as little agreement about the concept of myth as about most other concepts in literary criticism' (p.vii). In fact Strelka suggests a opposition between true myth, which 'transcends the logical sphere', and false myth, which blurs the boundaries between the finite and infinite by applying the qualities of one to the other (p.ix). This, of course, simply leads to further confusions and problems of definition, where whether a myth is 'true' or 'false' (or 'both' or 'neither') can be disputed.

Despite the difficulty of defining myth, it can thus be characterised by its imposing definition on other things and by its having a sacred element. Myth is therefore also an

arbiter of meaning: Claude Lévi-Strauss found it 'impossible to conceive of meaning without order' (1978, p.9), and it is myth that creates the cultural order from which meaning arises. With meaning, the notion of narrative becomes more prominent. As Calvino put it, 'Each animal, object, and relationship acquired beneficent or maleficent powers, which were to be called magical powers and should instead have been called narrative powers, potentials inherent in words, the faculty of combining with other words at the level of discourse' (1975, p.76). It is through these narrative powers that literature separated itself from myth with the birth of the fairy tale, a more recent ancestor of fantasy. Although myth and folktale could blur to some degree, Patricia Carden (1980) claimed that narrative 'detaches from sacred ritual and begins to lead its own life' (p.180) through the fairy tale, which she considered the beginning of literature.

One of the defining traits of the fairy tale, which distinguishes it from myth, is its focus on individual and everyday elements, as opposed to myth's focus on collective identities and sacred figures. This, however, is a contested point: in his book on fairy tales, Roger Sale (1977) argued that fairy tales 'reach back into a dateless time' (p.372) and are 'consoling in their knowledge that there are many stories to tell, many ways to tell the "same" story' (ibid.). Sale's first point may be correct, in that fairy tales are descended from myth and folklore's 'collective and archetypal' concepts and story-patterns (Block, 1980, p.20), but the general argument that fairy tales are of interest because they are retellings of the 'same' stories (à la Vladimir Propp) was disputed by John Tolkien in *On Fairy-Stories*:

Statements of that kind may express (in undue abbreviation) some element of truth; but they are not true in a fairy-story sense, they are not true in art or literature. It is precisely the colouring, the atmosphere, the unclassifiable individual details of a story, and above all the general purport that informs with life the undissected bones of the plot, that really count. (1966, p.7)

The word that best summarises Tolkien's claim for fairy-stories is 'character'. It is the unique character of a fairy tale, and the characters *in* that tale, that set it apart both from myth and from other fairy tales. This focus on the individual rather than the general element is supported by Bruno Bettelheim (1976), who claimed that 'more can be learned from [fairy tales] about the inner problems of human beings [...] than from any other type of story' (p.5). However, again a contradiction arises, as although fairy tales are individual

in their character, they change over time almost as much as myths do. This can involve a story changing its ending entirely, such as Riding Hood being saved by the woodcutter, or it can involve elements being added or removed, while keeping the core story the same. For example, removing the three coloured riders that are seen in the forest from the Russian story of Vassilissa the Beautiful keeps the core story of Vassilissa serving the witch Baba Yaga in exchange for fire completely intact. Propp, in his classic *Morphology of the Folktale*, found that not only are fairy tales and folk tales reducible to a standard set of elements, a group of which occur in a standard order within any individual tale, but also found that ‘each element of the fairy tale can change independently of the other elements’ (1968, p.53). This makes the identity of fairy tales problematic: if a fairy tale is reducible to parts, none of which in itself characterises the tale, then how can it have a unique character and identity?

These problems of identity and definition are also present in several texts that drew their inspiration from myth and fairy tale. These ‘taproot texts’ of John Clute and John Grant’s *Encyclopedia of Fantasy* (1997) drew from the traditions that preceded them and represented their elements in ways that ultimately became integral to the development of fantasy as a modern genre. Although not considered fantasy in the modern sense, they were fantastical, incorporating magic and otherworldly beings. Ultimately these texts merged with their own sources. In one example, Edmund Spenser’s *The Faerie Queene* (1596/1882), we see that definition remains important, and the sacred element of myth has not been entirely lost. In the Mutabilitie cantos of *The Faerie Queene*, Mutabilitie, the personification of Change, claims the right to rule over all the world, including the gods, arguing that change is intrinsic to all things and therefore dominant over them. Eventually she petitions Nature, who resolves the issue thus:

I well consider all that ye haue sayd,  
And find that all things stedfastnes doe hate  
And changed be: yet being rightly wayd  
They are not changed from their first estate;  
But by their change their being doe dilate:  
And turning to themselues at length againe,  
Doe worke their owne perfection so by fate:  
Then ouer them Change doth not rule and raigne;

But they raigne ouer change, and doe their states maintaine.

Clearly identity, demarcation, and order are the paramount concerns for Spenser, and Nature's speech appropriately preserves them. This emphasis on proper order is evident in other taproot texts, and often manifests as the presence of strictly-enforced rules: Charles Perrault's tale of Bluebeard comes to mind. Geoffrey Chaucer's *The Franklin's Tale* is another good example, as Chaucer's characters are bound by multiple layers of obligation and social rules. Arveragus promises his wife Dorigen never to exercise sovereignty over her, but cannot let it be known publicly for 'shame of his degree' (2008, line 752). Dorigen promises fidelity to Arveragus, but is then entrapped into a promise to her suitor Aurelius: she will love him if he can fulfill an impossible task; Aurelius holds Dorigen to her promise, and is in turn bound by his debt to the clerk who enables his success through magic. The story requires that the characters be bound by rules, promises, and obligations, and that these are either broken or threatened to be broken.

In fact, fantasy, in a very real sense, is predicated on rules being broken. This is particularly important to a queer reading of fantasy as oaths and promises are one of the strongest examples fantasy has of the power of performativity, where there is no difference between word and action. Performative acts affirm identity, so the breaking of these promises therefore challenges identity: if Dorigen broke her promise to her husband, her identity as a faithful wife would be damaged, but if she broke her bargain with her suitor then her identity as a honourable person would be threatened.

This increased emphasis on boundaries and rules in fairy tale points to its strong influence on fantasy. Boundary-making and boundary-breaking are integral to Baeten's definition of myth, and to fantasy more generally. Boundaries mark space as forbidden, whether that space is legal, social, or sexual. However, by the creation of a forbidden space they invite its examination and exploration. Marking something out as prohibited labels it as Other, and invites transgression. Christina Rossetti's *Goblin Market* (1862) is a classic example:

We must not look at goblin men, we must not buy their fruits  
Who knows upon what soil they fed their hungry thirsty roots?

This ties directly into a primal concept of the queer as 'the taboo-breaker, the monstrous,

the uncanny' (Case, 1991, p.3). In myth, and later in folk- and fairy tale, a central theme is transgression: the breaking of rules, venturing into forbidden places, and doing forbidden things. Without rule-breaking, there is no story. If Cinderella returns home before midnight, or if Red Riding Hood stays on the path, then neither of those tales can exist. Similarly, the prototypical fantasy hero who never receives the call to adventure (Campbell, 1949) cannot be a main character. Fantasy is not interested in humble farm boys who stay on the farm; myth is not interested in those who follow the rules. Only rule-breaking, and by extension the rule-breakers, can help to create a story: these queer rule-breakers are therefore essential to narrative.

Propp (1968) notes that the placing of a prohibition, and the breaking of the same prohibition, is a particularly common feature of fairy tales and related stories. Cinderella must be home by midnight, Little Red Riding Hood must not leave the path, and Goldilocks must not enter the bears' house.<sup>1</sup> Neil Gaiman's poem 'Instructions' (2006) illustrates this particularly well, being entirely composed of traditional prohibitions and injunctions:

Walk through the house. Take nothing. Eat  
nothing.  
However, if any creature tells you that it hungers,  
feed it.  
If it tells you that it is dirty,  
clean it.  
If it cries to you that it hurts,  
if you can,  
ease its pain.

All of these prohibitions define what is normal and accepted within the confines of the tale; however, to successfully explore what the prohibitions mean they must be broken. As Todorov (1970) put it, 'For there to be a transgression, the norm must be apparent.' A modern example of this ideology is found in the computer game *The Path* (Tale of Tales,

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<sup>1</sup> In many cases it is difficult to express the mix of prohibitions, obligations, custom, contract, and taboo evoked in such tales in one word. The term *prohibition* is awkward here, though it is used by Propp, and *obligation* is not much better. The Irish word *geas* would perhaps come closest to encapsulating the various meanings. For convenience, however, I have continued to use the term *prohibition* in this chapter.



2009). Based on the story of Red Riding Hood, the player controls one of six sisters of different ages travelling through the forest. Each of them is told not to leave the titular path; each has a different ‘wolf’, or dark fate, waiting for her if she does. In fact, all the player is told is ‘Go to Grandmother’s house and stay on the path.’ However, if the player chooses not to leave the path, and simply heads directly to Grandmother’s house the story does not advance and the character they chose is simply sent back to the beginning. For the plot to advance – for the story to have any true meaning – then the rule must be broken and the girl must leave the path and meet her fate. As Gaiman’s poem ‘Locks’ (2006), about the tale of Goldilocks, says:

But we make our own mistakes. We sleep  
unwisely.  
It is our right. It is our madness and our glory.  
The repetition echoes down the years.

One very common manifestation of transgression through rule-breaking is the breaking of oaths or promises. These are common in myth and fairytale: the heroine of Rumpelstiltskin promises the titular dwarf her unborn child, and later seeks to go back on the bargain; Cinderella promises to be home by midnight, but does not fulfil this promise. Without these transgressions, and their associated rule-breaking, there is no story. In fact, to read fantasy is, ultimately, also to transgress. Readers of fantasy are breaking the same rules as the protagonists through identification; they are transgressing against normality by venturing into a Secondary World (Tolkien, 1966) and accepting its rules, however temporarily. Fantasy is therefore, by its nature, rebellious against and transgressive of normality. Queerness, similarly, centres on transgression: contravening the normal standards, and resisting labelling and categorisation. Fantasy not only encourages but actively abets such transgressions, and is therefore well-suited to a queer perspective. This is, perhaps, the most important aspect of the folk/fairytale that enters modern fantasy.

And what do we find underlying fantasy’s narrative conventionality? A continuous implied assertion that everyday language lies, that coherent characters are inventions of the observer, and especially that orderliness and chronology properly belong to the realm of the imagination. (Attebery, 1992, p.54)

The work of the collectors of folktale such as Perrault and the brothers Grimm established another source for the pre-fantasy canon: their collected works became the standard canon of the fantastical, inspiring a developing interest in fairytales in general. There was a resurgence of interest in these folktales and fairytales in the late 19th-century, a primary example being Andrew Lang's *The Blue Fairy Book* (1889) and its sequels. However, there was a prevailing idea that such stories, and fantasy in general, were both best suited for and intended for children: Tolkien (1996) notes that Lang's tongue-in-cheek approach, aimed at parents, was to the detriment of his fairytales. This shows how fantasy can and has been split between several audiences: Lang was writing ostensibly for children, but also for the parents who would read to them. This is a reversal of the situation experienced by the brothers Grimm, who were surprised to find their tales – intended for adults – were read by and to children. The later literary fairytales drew from this pre-fantasy canon and became the precursors to the modern fantasy genre proper. The modern idea of fantasy as a literary genre intended for adult readers began to take shape in the 19th-century works of George MacDonald, William Morris, and Eric Eddison, all of whom wrote works intended for adults. Later authors such as Lord Dunsany and James Cabell both continued this trend and wrote still-more playful and self-reflexive fantasy.

The establishment and codification of fantasy as a genre in the cultural consciousness today is inextricably linked to the publication of Tolkien's *The Lord of the Rings* in 1954-55. It codified and incorporated almost all of the now-standard genre conventions, reinforced fantasy's links to ancient myth, and remains (rightly or not) the exemplar of modern fantasy, ultimately becoming identified with the genre. In many ways, Tolkien's *The Lord of the Rings* was the 'pinch in the hourglass' for fantasy, a watershed moment where its ancestral roots in myth were drawn into a codified whole, later to expand into new and wider definitions. Despite Tolkien's popularity, fantasy remained ghettoised as a genre, frequently not considered a 'proper' form of literature by critics. As Hume (1984) put it, 'to many academics [...] fantasy means Tolkien and his ilk – nineteenth- and twentieth-century authors whose *oeuvres* are not part of traditional literature courses.' (p.3) Even in 2003, Melissa Thomas wrote 'I know very well the idea of fantasy literature conjures up images of pimply adolescents sequestered under the dining-room table, rolling twelve-sided dice [...] The problem with fantasy literature is that it has a certain stigma attached to it.' (Thomas, 2003, p.60).

Fantasy, having been sharply defined, responded by expanding and reforming its boundaries. The publication in the 1970s of the roleplaying game Dungeons & Dragons (stereotypically evoked by Thomas) and its subsequent popularity affirmed the genre conventions drawn from Tolkien but also heralded an era of interactive fantasy, where readers of fantasy took an active part in creating its, and their, stories. This trend was continued in the publication of 'gamebooks', and later in the more recent popularity of fantasy computer games, almost all of which have role-playing elements. As a reaction to standardisation of the genre, authors continued subverting and exploring fantasy's now-established conventions: Diana Jones's *The Tough Guide to Fantasyland* (1996) humorously defined and subverted every standard fantasy tool, while authors such as Terry Pratchett applied them to new settings and satirised them through use. Most recently, there has been a strong trend toward mixing subgenres of fantasy together, as well as combining fantasy with other genres: examples include paranormal romance, urban fantasy, and alternate-history fantasies. These trends have led to fantasy being considered a strongly postmodern genre.

Problems of definition, identity, boundaries, and transgression are all integral elements of fantasy's history and its development as a genre. These elements all allow fantasy to incorporate, and even embrace, queer elements. From this perspective, the sought perfection invoked by Nature in Spenser's *The Faerie Queene* can be reinterpreted as the *resistance* to final closure – not the maintenance of one's 'first estate', but the constant drive to change and redefine oneself. This would involve not surrendering to change or claiming to reign over it, but embracing and integrating change as an inextricable element of one's (constructed) self. It is those texts that 'attempt to remain "open", dissatisfied, endlessly desiring' (Jackson, 1981, p.9), and thereby reject final and essential definition, that are the most transgressive, and ultimately the most queer. Regrettably, these texts which most embody the queer potential of fantasy are often the ones most marginalised within the genre.

## *Critics on queer fantasy*

In reviewing the critical literature on queer fantasy, the greatest surprise is that very few critics have written on this topic at all. Whether discussing fantasy's queer potential as a genre or the representation of LGBT/queer characters and themes in fantasy, the lack of critical attention given to the topic is evident. This is present to such a degree in the literature that any critical work that has been done on LGBT elements in fantasy is notable for that fact alone, irrespective of the merits of its arguments. Following the vein of the critical discussions, however, it can be seen that there is strong critical justification for treating 'LGBT fantasy' as a genre unto itself, originating from and located within – but separate from – the wider fantasy genre.

A comprehensive review of the critical literature found a distinct lack of critics who addressed queer fantasy directly rather than discussing queer science fiction, with four deserving especial mention: James Riemer (1986), who discusses the early presence of homosexuality in science fiction and fantasy; Joseph Marchesani (2002), in his discussion of post-Tolkienian fantasy; Battis (2007), in his thesis on magic and melancholy in fantasy and their links to the queer; and Anne Balay (2012), who discussed queer young adult fantasy fiction<sup>2</sup>. A number of non-academic works also deal with LGBT/queer fantasy: Garber and Paleo's *Uranian Worlds* (1983 & 1990) was an early effort to catalogue alternative sexuality in fantasy and science fiction rather than critically explore it, and will be examined in more detail in the second chapter of this thesis; Ellen Bosman and John Bradford's *Gay, Lesbian, Bisexual, and Transgendered literature: A Genre Guide* (2008), a textual catalogue designed primarily for librarians, will likewise inform the methodology of the second chapter; finally, Nicola Griffith and Stephen Pagel's introduction to their short story collection *Bending the Landscape: Fantasy* (1996) discusses the utility and power of gay and lesbian fantasy.

Battis (2007) notes that 'few critics ... have actually engaged with what has now come to be called *contemporary* fantasy literature' (p.4). An essay by Marchesani (2002) in *The Gay & Lesbian Literary Heritage* sheds some light on this gap: he claims the genres of science fiction and fantasy freed their characters from convention in two separate ways.

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<sup>2</sup> Phyllis Betz's *The Lesbian Fantastic* (2011) was published after the majority of the literature review for this thesis was concluded and was thus only uncovered during revisions. Betz's book discusses the fantastic across multiple genres, and devotes a chapter to examining lesbian fantasy in particular.

Science fiction accomplished this through ‘extrapolation, a narrative trope that is particularly well-suited for considering sexuality and gender as social constructions’ (p.597), whereas fantasy used ‘schemes of magic, which are better suited for considering sexuality and gender as essential features of identity’ (ibid.). He considers magic in fantasy a vehicle linking sexual desire and ‘paranormal psychology’ in a sexual/magical coming of age, or giving extraordinary power to alternative gender and sexual expression. On the surface, this appears to be a reasonable criticism: if Marchesani’s assumptions are valid, then science fiction might genuinely be a better genre for exploring queer themes, and fantasy’s queer potential overstated. However, there is another aspect of queer fantasy texts and their use of magic lying outside his definition, which situates fantasy as central to queer identity formation: although fantasy may treat an individual’s identity *at any one moment* as being fixed and essential, it is also the literature of transformation and of reshaping identity. Fantasy’s queer potential is thus reinforced rather than weakened.

Returning to Battis, his work illustrates both the importance of and lack of academic work on queer fantasy: he notes ‘this study is nowhere near exhaustive, and entire books could be written on queerness within British fantasy-fiction, postcolonial fantasy literature, cinema, and contemporary television’ (2007, p.260). His goal, though, ‘was never to queer fantasy’ as it is ‘already manifestly queer’ (ibid.). Battis’ terminology is interesting: in one sense fantasy is of course manifestly queer – its queer history and potential has already been discussed and affirmed in this very chapter – but in the other sense of the word it is not, because this queer potential has not in fact *manifested* in the form of an active engagement with LGBT and queer characters within the genre.

In the face of such a paucity of queer fantasy criticism, it may be useful to consider recent work on fantasy’s sibling, science fiction. The journal *Science Fiction Studies* published a symposium of critical thought on ‘Sexuality in Science Fiction’ in 2009, to which eighteen authors and critics of science fiction contributed. Due to its recent date of publication, its large number of contributors, and its publication in a prestigious journal in the field, this was considered a reasonably comprehensive overview of much recent critical thought on queer science fiction and its contributions were examined in detail.

These critics differed widely on science fiction’s queerness: Mark Bould (2009) describes science fiction as ‘long-imagined sexless’ despite its ‘*manifest* sexual content’ (p.387,

emphasis in original). Despite this, Farah Mendlesohn (2009) states bluntly in her discussion of young adult science fiction that ‘The heteronormativity of science fiction for children and teens is astonishing. It reflects neither the real world, nor the wider world of books for younger readers’ (p.398). She notes that most modern young adult literature deals directly with modern social and family issues, such as non-gender-conforming boys and girls, single-parent families, and working mothers, but that none of these are represented in equivalent science fiction. She mentions the idea that ‘when you make part of the future strange, you need some kind of anchor to the present through an element of unchangingness’ (ibid.). Mendlesohn implies that science fiction used heteronormativity and the nuclear family as its ‘unchanging’ elements: if this was also done in fantasy, this would preclude, or at least severely limit, queer and LGBT representation. It could be said that this has, in fact, already happened, which would explain the lack of this representation in practice in the wider genre and suggests establishing new anchors – through the mechanism of a new genre – would help resolve this resistance to representing the queer.

Michael Levy also acknowledges this emphasis on ‘traditional nuclear families’ and ‘heteronormative gender roles’ (2009, p.395) in young adult science fiction, and is the only critic (out of eighteen) to mention fantasy as well. He comments that ‘things began changing in the late 1980s’ (ibid.) regarding the depiction of sex and gender in science fiction and fantasy, and that although a heteronormative norm is still evident readers ‘on the lookout for other options’ (ibid.) can now find alternatives. In other words, although there are now queer spaces within science fiction, it is necessary to read queerly in order to explore its queerness fully. This perspective, whatever about its utility for science fiction, is of especial importance when considering LGBT fantasy as an independent genre. What difference is there between queer spaces that are there if one knows how to look for and read for them existing within the fantasy genre, and an identifiable hidden (or at least invisible) and discrete genre existing within those spaces? Arguably there is no difference at all, which shows ‘the power of maps to shape conceptual experience’ (Casey, 2012, p.113) when discussing genre boundaries.

Several critics focused on science fiction’s engagement with social and political realities; De Witt Kilgore (2009) comments that ‘genre writers frequently replicate the social norms of their times’ (p.393). This ties directly into Andrew Butler’s argument that, given the advances in gay liberation in the 1970s after the Stonewall Riots and the declassification of

homosexuality as a mental disorder by the American Psychiatric Association in 1973, 'science fiction was well-placed to reflect such social changes' (2009, p.388). He notes that this did not happen in practice, based on his research into 1970s science fiction: 'Forty years on, real gay characters are still rare in written sf, and almost nonexistent on the small or large screen' (p.389). No wonder Patricia Melzer (2009) decided to issue 'a plea for good queer sf'! (p.397) If fantasy's engagement (or rather lack of it) can be said to mirror this trend, that is another argument for its having marginalised its queer potential in general and its LGBT characters in particular, as well as making a case for a serious effort to uncover the 'good queer fantasy' that may have been overlooked or lost.

Speaking of genres' queer potential, Attebery discussed the topic in the context of science fiction. He recommended that queer theorists 'reset the controls on our gaydar, from "detect" to "decode"' (2009, p.385), implying that merely finding or noticing queer characters is insufficient: it is also necessary to explore and interpret how they are represented. His comment that queer characters 'show us ourselves from a perspective we cannot otherwise attain' (p.386) is similar to Sylvie Bérard's claim that breaking the common or binary patterns is 'always there as a potential' (2009, p.386) for science fiction. She goes further, declaring that 'science fiction, because it exposes readers to a set of possible worlds and possible identities, is a great *tell-tale* about their ultimate limits – and the closer ones are not always the easiest to cross'. This is especially relevant to fantasy, as fantasy claims a similar potential to create possible worlds and possible identities. Riemer, however, noticed that both genres offer 'a distancing effect for the writer who wishes to create homosexual characters or deal with homosexual themes' (1986, p.145). This may explain the lack of direct engagement with such characters in the broader fantasy genre: the shift in perspective offered by fantasy, while making some forms of representation easier, also distances the genre from active engagement with LGBT identities. The solution, then, would be to define a genre derived from the fantastic that inescapably situates such identities at its centre: hence the need for an LGBT fantasy genre.

Finally, this tension between a genre and its queer elements was touched on by a number of critics in the *Science Fiction Studies* symposium. Roger Luckhurst (2009) made the point that 'The very beginnings of genre sf in the late nineteenth century are clearly coincident with the emergence of a new set of definitions around hetero/homosexuality, incoherently mapped across masculinity/femininity.' (p.396) Candas Dorsey (2009) wrote 'Most of the

time, queer isn't queer enough in sf' (p.390) and goes on to wish for 'A breakthrough of paradigm' (p.390), where something entirely new is created and represented in sf. While this research cannot grant that wish for science fiction, the declaration and establishment of LGBT fantasy as a distinct genre would perhaps give fantasy that needed and desired paradigmatic breakthrough.



## *Genre theory and establishing an LGBT fantasy canon*

To consider establishing LGBT fantasy as a genre, it is first necessary to explore genre as a concept. Historically there have been a number of theoretical understandings of genre, varying considerably in their definitions. The first theory of genres is generally attributed to Aristotle, who established epic, lyric, and drama as the three primary forms. The Aristotelian theory, arguably unnecessarily rigorous, was ‘a basic assumption of Western literary theory’ (Duff, 2000, p.1) for over two thousand years, and produced a genre theory which derived its power and authority from a classificatory system. David Duff wrote:

...it was believed that genres were static, universal categories whose character did not alter across time; and that it was therefore feasible to judge a work written in, say, 1750 by rules formulated in the fourth century BC, or to deny the existence of a new genre on the grounds that Aristotle didn’t define it. (p.4)

This limited and limiting view of monolithic genres remained dominant until the Romantic period, when it became more widely accepted genres could, and did, change over time, and a historical evolutionary model of genre became predominant. However, the concept of genres changing as a result of cultural change, and, by extension, the idea that genres were ‘culturally constructed categories’ (Duff, p.4), remained unarticulated until the Russian Formalists, such as Yury Tynyanov, in the early twentieth century. In the twentieth century, which Paul Cobley called ‘the era of genre’ (2006, p.45), once uniform and monolithic perspectives on genre and literature multiplied to the point where genre theory is now a confusing and often contradictory, almost sectarian, collection of theoretical perspectives; Duff (2000), in *Modern Genre Theory*, notes that there has been an ‘erosion of the perception of genre’ in the modern period (p.1), perhaps in reaction to this. Tynyanov (1924/2000) wrote that all textbooks of literary theory invariably begin by defining (or attempting to define) literature and genre, definitions that are ‘ever more difficult to make’ (p.30). This, according to Tynyanov, was due to the constant evolution of genres and of ‘the literary fact’ (that is, what is considered literary). This suggests that the evolution of genre, and the emergence of new genres, is a normal process and therefore working to uncover and establish a new genre would not be an unreasonable research goal.

Duff (2000) defines genre as ‘a recurring type or category of text, as defined by structural,

thematic and/or functional criteria' (p.xiii) and notes that 'the term is often used, sometimes pejoratively, to denote types of popular fiction in which a high degree of standardisation is apparent' (ibid.). Attebery emphasised the tension between these two definitions of genre by providing two contrasting yet equally valid definitions of the broader fantasy genre:

Fantasy is a form of popular escapist literature that combines stock characters and devices – wizards, dragons, magic swords, and the like – into a predictable plot in which the perennially understaffed forces of good triumph over a monolithic evil.

Fantasy is a sophisticated mode of storytelling characterized by stylistic playfulness, self-reflexiveness, and a subversive treatment of established orders of society and thought. Arguably the major fictional mode of the late twentieth century, it draws upon contemporary ideas about sign systems and the indeterminacy of meaning and at the same time recaptures the vitality and freedom of nonmimetic traditional forms such as epic, folktale, romance, and myth. (Attebery, 1992, p.1)

Although it is not clear we need to choose between these two perspectives, or that they are in conflict with one another, it is necessary to have at least a functional definition of a genre in order to work with it. This leads to the critical concept of *canonicity*, which is essential to exploring and defining LGBT fantasy as a genre. A genre is ultimately defined through and by its canon: those texts that are considered to reside within, constitute, and direct the development of, the genre. Therefore the most appropriate way to construct a genre is to construct a canon for that genre: if we build it, they will come. However, genres, and popular genres especially, are highly contested spaces: it is possible for a novel published as fantasy, and quite possibly read as fantasy by readers due to its branding, to not be considered fantasy from a critical perspective. The potential for readers to read a text as belonging to a genre, whether or not it was 'supposed' to be read in that way, is also present. This allows genre boundaries to shift despite attempts to fix them, and implies that there are trends and undercurrents within all genres which may not necessarily be evident, working to transform and rewrite the genre: a tool of genre theory that can be used to liberate LGBT fantasy texts from a marginalised position in fantasy and incorporate them into the centre of a new genre defined by their presence.

Another such useful tool is the concept of *automatisation*: Duff defines automatisation as when literary devices or genres lose their potency due to overuse. He notes that ‘The artistic potency and perceptibility of a genre or device can sometimes be restored through acts of defamiliarization such as parody or other kinds of transformation.’ (2000, p.x) It could be argued that modern fantasy has itself become automatised and lost power and potency through its classification as genre fiction: ‘To many academics, after all, “fantasy” is a subliterature in lurid covers sold in drugstores.’ (Hume, 1984, p.3) One transformation, of course, that could be enacted upon it is the use of LGBT and queer potential to defamiliarise the real: even working in their own genre space, such texts can combat this automatisation of the wider genre

This idea of a trend of LGBT fantasy emerging within the broader genre of fantasy and working to combat fantasy’s automatisation as a genre – the most relevant example of such automatisation being its heteronormative structures and conservative social outlook – is especially relevant when considered in the context of other critical approaches. In particular, Tynyanov’s concept of constructive principles in genres, and genres *as* constructive principles, is essential to the critical work of this thesis. Tynyanov (1924/2000) claimed that literary evolution happened as follows:

An opposing constructive principle takes place in dialectical relationship to an automatised principle of construction.

It is then applied – the constructive principle seeks out the readiest field of application.

It spreads over the greatest mass of phenomena.

It becomes automatised and gives rise to opposing principles of construction. (p.38)

The critical work of this thesis is therefore to assess whether LGBT fantasy meets these criteria by chronicling its presence within the wider genre and testing its validity as a genre unto itself by its adherence to this pattern. In fact Tynyanov’s concept of constructive principles in literary evolution can be used to treat the proposed genre of LGBT fantasy as a constructive principle in its own right.

The viability of this approach is borne out in Tynyanov's own writings on the origin of these principles. Firstly, he notes that opposing constructive principles take shape from "*chance*" results and "*chance*" exceptions and errors' (1924/2000, p.38, italics and quotes in original) and that every 'blemish', "mistake" or "misdemeanour" (p.39) can potentially become a new constructive principle. Tynyanov's emphasis is deliberate: these changes are random inasmuch as they are unplanned deviations from the norm of the genre, but they are not necessarily accidental on the part of the writer or the reader. In particular, a 'chance' result that occurs under the right conditions (when its opposing constructive principle has become automatised) has the potential to become a construction in its own right, and to spread: LGBT characters establishing a presence within a genre where they are unwelcome, or at least discouraged, would certainly qualify. Tynyanov also wrote that 'the more "subtle", the more unusual, the phenomenon, the more clearly will the new constructive principle take shape' (p.39). The emergence of LGBT characters in the fantasy genre was, almost by definition, an unusual phenomenon by societal standards and the structures of heteronormativity. Finally, Tynyanov claimed that 'Art finds the phenomena it needs in the field of everyday life.' (p.39) LGBT and queer identities were and are a very modern and a very 'real' phenomenon, necessary for art that, in Tynyanov's words, seeks phenomena that are "someone else's", "new", fresh.' (p.40) In fact the LGBT genre seems to meet Tynyanov's requirements for a new constructive principle almost by perfectly, particularly the role a constructive principle plays in transforming 'a fact of life into a fact of literature' (p.43).

Mikhail Bakhtin's concepts of speech genres and secondary genres are equally useful theoretical tools for examining an emergent LGBT fantasy genre. Bakhtin (1986/2000) claimed everyday modes and acts of speech constituted genres in themselves which were open to exploration by genre theory. He also distinguished between primary and secondary genres: primary genres are simple and everyday (letters, jokes, speeches); secondary genres such as the novel are complex and incorporate primary genres into themselves (Duff, 2000, p.xv). His treatment of speech genre is useful as it relates to the concept of self-performative speech acts, which are present and powerful in an LGBT context in particular. Coming out, or even saying 'I am gay', is one of the most resonant and potent speech acts in the LGBT canon – and, in fact, its presence and power in the literature will be examined in depth in the fourth chapter.

However, Bakhtin also claimed that as speech genres become incorporated into or metamorphosed into secondary genres they lose their power and immediacy: dialogue in a novel is considered primarily through the formal lens of the novel, rather than as actual dialogue. Therefore 'realistic' diction in novels and film is unrealistic: characters speak with almost perfect clarity, without the pausing, constant repetition, and interruptions that characterise actual day-to-day dialogue. The dialogue has become 'a literary-artistic event' (1986/2000, p.85) and has lost its 'immediate relation to actual reality and to the real utterances of others' (ibid.). This has implications for the relationship between LGBT fantasy and realism: fantasy is mimetic by nature and LGBT fantasy perhaps more so, with its inclusion of 'facts of life'. As Hume put it in *Fantasy and mimesis: Responses to reality in Western literature* (1984), 'Literature bears an inescapable resemblance to reality, and the more the work tells a story, the more necessary the presence of the real.' (p.5)

In fantasy, worlds are created and defined in relation to the normal and the everyday. This is why Tolkien (1966) used the term 'Secondary Worlds' to describe the worlds of fantasy: they are predicated on the existence of the real (primary) world, just as secondary genres are dependent on primary genres. However, Bakhtin's theory would imply that the fantasy genre loses its power to comment on the real by having removed itself from the primary world: its incorporation of primary-world (realist) elements makes them part of the fantasy, and removes their direct link to the real, and this would also apply to a proposed LGBT fantasy genre.

There are a number of problems with this interpretation. First, as Hume put it, 'Departure from reality does not preclude comment upon it: indeed, this is one of fantasy's primary functions.' (1984, p.xii). There is certainly a tension that exists in fantasy between incorporating enough realist elements to allow readers to comprehend the world of the text, and incorporating so many that the fantasy becomes indistinguishable from reality: Ursula Le Guin addressed this in *From Elfland to Poughkeepsie* (1973), where she claimed that fantasy that incorporates too many realist elements should not be considered fantasy. However, rather than removing itself (and its realist elements) from the real, fantasy *transforms* the real. Much of the plotting and political intrigue in the world of Westeros in *A Game of Thrones* (Martin, 1996) could as easily take place in medieval Europe, or, in a somewhat altered form, in any number of modern political arenas. That it does take place

in a fantasy world, though, changes how the story is read: these realist elements are read within a larger context and setting of the fantastic. The very fact that they are *not* taking place in the ‘real’ world allows them to be seen from a new perspective and commented upon in new ways. If this potential inherent in fantasy can be enacted by LGBT fantasy – already a new perspective in its own way – its power and immediacy should be unquestionable.

### *Reconciling a queer theoretical approach*

The tools of genre theory are integral to establishing LGBT fantasy as a genre and establishing a canon to define it. However, as a genre predicated on difference, LGBT fantasy should also benefit from a critical perspective especially designed to explore the workings of the non-normative and the different. Queer theory is the critical approach best suited to exploring this: in order to examine the emergence of explicitly LGBT characters in fantasy, and their resultant separation into their own genre, a theoretical approach which incorporates both genre theory and queer theory will be required.

Queer theory is a relatively new discipline of literary criticism and of cultural studies more generally. Nevertheless, Donald Hall wrote in 2003 that ‘The body of abstract theory and applied readings that came to be known as “queer theory” during the 1990s [...] is dauntingly complex and diverse,’ (p.1) and it has only grown since then. Queer theory is rooted in post-structuralist thought and in feminist (and by extension gay and lesbian) critical theory. It is difficult to categorise, however, as one of its goals is to resist closure and final definition. Broadly speaking, queer theory works to deconstruct binary oppositions in texts – these can be as basic as male/female, as culturally complex as heterosexual/homosexual, or as dangerously implicit as insider/outsider. Not only does it tease apart binarisms, it actively challenges the existence of such dichotomies. In short, it is a non-essentialist approach that treats identities as limited and culturally constructed phenomena subject to change. It is important to note, however, that although queer theory considers identities to be constructed, it does not necessarily suggest they are invalid: Fuss (1989), a prominent queer theorist, noted that even fictions of identity are nonetheless powerful. This embrace of contradiction and paradox is integral to queer theory.

Although it is often used when working with texts by queer authors, or about queer characters, queer theory itself can offer a more general theoretical framework; it often foregrounds issues of gender and/or sexual identity, but, as Sue-Ellen Case (1991) put it, ‘[queer theory] works not at the site of gender, but at the site of ontology, to shift the ground of being itself.’ (p.3) Queer theory, therefore, offers extremely valuable insights for examining not just queer fantasy, but fantasy generally. It allows for a queer deconstructive reading of fantasy’s history as a genre, where fantasy’s implicitly (or ‘manifestly’, as Battis puts it) queer elements can be examined in the context of the emergence of explicitly queer

characters. It is also particularly helpful for deconstructing and decoding the LGBT and queer identities that will be present in an LGBT fantasy canon. Queer theory is also useful for simply providing an alternative perspective: relying solely on one theoretical approach risks becoming blind to its assumptions and limitations. Milton Ehre (1986), in a review of Peter Steiner's book on the Russian Formalist approach to genre, which included Tynyanov, points out several of that theory's limitations:

As the author is transformed from a willing subject into a passive agent of historical processes [...] the reader is locked into his historical moment, able only to focus on phenomena of the past that are akin to his own circumstances. (p.91)

Ehre argues that the author and reader are both marginalised by Tynyanov's focus on historical processes and shifts within genres; queer readings would be useful, indeed liberating, here in order to incorporate those marginalised perspectives and challenge the received wisdom on the topic. For example, a queer approach might recognise the active role of research and interpretation in creating – not simply recognising – an LGBT fantasy genre. Queer theory helps provide what Hall called 'an inside/outside perspective, in which we recognize our own discursive constraints and the limitations of our perspectives, but, at the same time, work energetically with the language and concepts available to us' (2003, p.6).

The major benefit, therefore, to incorporating queer theory in this thesis is that it can, ideally, compensate for some of the limitations of a genre theory approach. For example, the binarisms of genre theory (such as the inclusion/exclusion of canon) are central to its role of classification. While this is a useful concept, it can be limiting when considering texts that fall into a grey area, neither inside nor outside the standard canon of genre definition, particularly in such a contested and protean genre space as fantasy. Queer theory is uniquely qualified to deal with grey areas, liminal spaces, and elements that refuse categorisation, defined as it is by abrading classifications and sitting 'athwart conventional categories' (Hall, 2003, p.13).

However, although queer theory is a useful and versatile framework, attempting to integrate it with genre theory leads to a fundamental conflict: are the workings of genre and the workings of queer theory in direct opposition? Genre theory is based on



description, classification, and categorisation: Garin Dowd (2006) described it as ‘the classification of classification’ (p.12). It has traditionally centered on the establishment of canons, and, as Dowd put it, declared its own validity and legitimacy through the inclusion and exclusion of texts from those genre canons. Similarly, Jean-François Lyotard associated genres with giving finality (Dowd, 2006). The ability to define what lies within generic boundaries is a powerful one. Bakhtin’s declaration that ‘the novel is the sole genre that continues to develop, that is as yet uncompleted’ (1981/2000, p.69) continues a critical association of most genres with completeness and fixity.

In contrast, queer theory is (precariously) defined by its resistance to definition and its challenge to classificatory systems. Paradoxically, and quite appropriately for queer theory, the qualities that make it useful to pair it with genre theory are the same qualities that call the theoretical validity of that pairing into question. Jacques Derrida’s classic text ‘The Law of Genre’ (1980) maintained rules and hierarchies were intrinsically linked to the nature of genre:

As soon as the word “genre” is sounded, as soon as it is heard, as soon as one attempts to conceive it, a limit is drawn. And when a limit is established, norms and interdictions are not far behind: “Do,” “Do not” says “genre”, the word “genre”, the figure, the voice, or the law of genre. (p.56)

Working purely from this statement, one might presume that a queer theory approach would be of benefit to a genre perspective: if so many norms and rules are present, then the value of a transgressive impulse is obvious. However, Derrida goes on to claim that genre effectively contains its own transgressive impulse. He asks ‘What if there were, lodged within the heart of the law itself, a law of impurity or a principle of contamination?’ (p.57) This paradoxical ‘law of impurity’ (p.59) effectively requires the mixing of genres, despite (and, indeed, because of) Derrida’s declaration that ‘Genres are not to be mixed. I will not mix genres.’ (p.55) Derrida’s argument is that generic texts contain markers that indicate their genre membership, but those markers are not themselves generic elements: instead, they exist outside the genre. Therefore to speak of genres and to demarcate genres requires stepping outside of genre; by extension, then, there is always an element of a text that remains outside genre, that participates in but does not belong to the genre.

This approach constructs genre and the meta-generic space as a closed system that does not admit of outside influences, including a queer theory approach. It also seems to invent its own quasi-queer perspective, effectively containing its own inherent queerness. This perspective, however, is limited because it is only oriented to/around the genre. A theoretical reorientation of Derrida's perspective does in fact permit a queer reading of genre. This is based on the fact that the space that exists outside genre-law is always oriented to/with/at genre itself. It is in a process of reciprocal definition with the law of genre: it is not subject to it, but it defines itself against it. The signifier that declares a text a novel, although it is not itself subject to the genre of novel, loses meaning if there is no definition or classification of 'novel'.

Let us consider fantasy with this in mind. Fantasy defines itself against the real, and therefore necessarily incorporates elements of the real. The law of genre, for fantasy, thus compels it to reach outside itself and violate its own boundaries. This incorporation of the real, which exists outside the concept of fantasy itself yet which is integral to defining a text *as* a fantasy, is one of the generic markers of fantasy. A realist element is necessary to fantasy; however, a realist element does not, in itself, make a text a fantasy text. Therefore fantasy's realist element is only useful as a marker within the meta-context of the existence of a fantasy genre: otherwise, it loses its power to signify. Fantasy incorporates its realist elements, but they have an existence outside it; these realist elements exist outside the fantasy genre, but lose their extra-generic meaning outside of their reciprocal relationship.

In Derrida's approach, there is therefore no perspective that looks *away* from genre: both the genre-law and its violation are dependent on, and focused on, one another. To look away from the genre, in this context, is to be open to transgressive influences from outside the reciprocal genre relationship. Queer theory has the potential to provide such a perspective. Derrida commented:

Thus, as soon as genre announces itself, one must respect a norm, one must not cross a line of demarcation, one must not risk impurity, anomaly, or monstrosity.  
(p.57)

Although genre provides its own internal impurities and anomalies through the mixing of genres, a queer perspective that essentially 'looks outward' from genre would allow us to

examine a shift that moved away from the genre by redefining its own space: namely, the shift that occurs in the genre through the establishment of LGBT fantasy.

Having examined the theoretical differences and conflicts between genre theory and queer theory, it is equally important to examine their similarities. Despite its emphasis on classification, genre theory is neither monolithic nor final, even in Aristotle. In fact, theories on how genres change and redefine themselves are central to modern theories of genre. Jean-Luc Godard describes genres 'turning their gaze upon themselves' (Dowd, 2006, p.15) and confronting their limits, leading to a stage where 'the category acknowledges its own boundary as arbitrary'. Tynyanov claimed that 'a static definition of a genre, one which would cover all its manifestations, is impossible: the genre dislocates itself' (1924/2000, p.32). It is this dislocation that is explored in many critical texts on genre theory: the attempt to classify and define something that actively resists final classification and closure.

It is this element of genre theory – the acknowledgement of each genre's active resistance to closure and definition – that establishes its first major similarity to queer theory. Historically, genre theory could be described as an essentialist theory, as it claimed a common element (namely, genre) between texts written in different historical periods and cultural contexts. An essentialist view of genre theory, however, is rooted in the notion of the finality of genres, and a number of theories of genre actively dispute that notion. Benedetto Croce, for example, declared:

Every true work of art has violated some established kind [genre] and upset the ideas of the critics, who have thus been obliged to broaden the kinds, until finally even the broadened kind has proved too narrow, owing to the appearance of new works of art, naturally followed by new scandals, new upsettings, and – new broadenings. (1953/2000, p.27)

Queer theory likewise actively resists closure and finality. This is its *raison d'être*, to a degree no other theoretical stance matches. Yet though it resists permanent closure, the establishment of temporary and flexible definitions are fundamental to its operation. Therefore, a sufficiently flexible genre theory approach should be able to incorporate a queer perspective, as long as attempts to give finality and closure are handled only as

transitional meanings. In this way the inherent contradiction between these theoretical frameworks can be a critical asset, used to derive and implement approaches that could not otherwise coexist.

In fact, genre theory and queer theory have a number of elements in common. They both consider the notion of a canon, and of canonicity in general, particularly important. Genre theory is predicated on exclusion from canon, whereas queer theory promotes exploring marginalised canons and exploding existing ones. Eve Sedgwick wrote in *Epistemology of the Closet* that:

Canonicity itself then seems the necessary wadding of pious obliviousness that allows for the transmission from one generation to another of texts that have the potential to dismantle the impacted foundation upon which a given culture rests. (1990, p.54)

This 'impacted foundation' evokes the concept of automatisisation, where the potential for subversion and disruption is lost from a genre, or a culture, over time. Sedgwick reads queerness into what is supposedly a closed system of classification, and the potential of the queer to disrupt and challenge accepted canons is paramount in this reading. Since any genre that changes over time, as all genres do, must reexamine and redefine its canon (or canons) accordingly, queer theory provides a perspective that allows these canons to be deconstructed and reconstructed in the presence of changing definitions, social contexts, and experiences.

The concepts of speech acts and performativity are also important to both genre theory and to queer theory. Alastair Renfrew (2006) summarised Tynyanov's theoretical position on performativity: 'Tynianov's [sic] reformulation of the concept of literary material rests on the dual idea that language and 'reality' (and art) cannot be separated, and that literary material is formed in the process of concrete verbal performance.' (p.441) This relates to the queer theory concept of performative acts, where identity is defined through performing and enacting that identity, both verbally and otherwise: one 'does' straightness or queerness (Lloyd, 1999). This potential to define, and redefine, reality and identity is a powerful one, and at the root of literary potential for change.

Finally, genre theory's concept of a hierarchy of genres is particularly relevant to queer theory's foregrounding of power relations. The Russian formalists coined the term 'canonisation of the junior branch' (Duff, 2000, p.x) to describe a previously marginal genre assuming a position of power and influence in the hierarchy of genres, which exactly describes what is happening with LGBT fantasy.

In summary, although genre theory works to construct categories and queer theory to deconstruct them, they can be used together in a unique and powerful way to enable LGBT fantasy. As Carolyn Miller put it in 'Genre as Social Action':

if the term "genre" is to mean anything theoretically or critically useful, it cannot refer to just any category or kind of discourse. One concern in rhetorical theory, then, is to make of rhetorical genre a stable classifying concept; another is to ensure that the concept is rhetorically sound. (1984, p.151)

Ideally genre theory can work towards the creation of a classifying concept, while queer theory works to find its limitations and weaknesses and to tear it down, not with the intent of precluding such a concept, but instead making it as sound and as applicable a concept as possible. Queer theory thus forces genre theory to acknowledge its own constructed nature and challenges genre to defend its borders. In fact, it is the elements that most define a theory of genre – an emphasis on classification and identification, a paradoxical tendency to establish and to break rules, and the constant redefinition and reconstruction of its identity – that also make it the most susceptible to queer readings and that will make a deliberate critical synthesis of genre theory with queer theory integral to this work of creating and uncovering the genre of LGBT fantasy.

## Chapter Two – Methodology

### *Overview*

With the ultimate goal of this research being to define, work with, and analyse a comprehensive canon for the emergent genre of LGBT fantasy novels in the period 1987-2000, a necessary step was to locate that canon: in other words, to become aware of and accumulate a body of literature that could be said to comprise the LGBT fantasy genre for the period in question.

Historically, academic work on such texts has been impeded by the fact that they are often very difficult to identify: ‘Tracing the sudden visibility of lesbian and gay male characters in sf is a historical detective story’ (Russ, 1990, p.xxv). Rather than working with an already-defined body of literature, the academic researcher of LGBT fantasy must work to recognise and uncover its texts, creating defined categories in which to place them in anticipation of constructing a canon. Due to the position of LGBT fantasy as a hidden genre, and its slow emergence into the mainstream, many of its canonical texts are easy to overlook or simply near-impossible to find: reasons include reviewers and publishers downplaying the queer elements of novels, small print runs and out-of-print status, and most importantly the lack of any clear cultural labelling of the genre. Effectively LGBT fantasy was, and remains to some degree, an invisible literature: although its texts are, in theory, available, actually identifying which of the vast numbers of fantasy texts published by presses large and small contain LGBT characters and themes requires a forensic approach. Problems of cultural definition, authorial intent, and reader interpretation complicate this process by making it difficult not only to locate LGBT and/or queer texts but also to pin down working definitions of such terms.

The most fundamental challenge encountered over the course of this research was overcoming this tendency of LGBT fantasy novels to hide in plain sight, concealing themselves from readers and researchers alike. To deal with this it was necessary to devise a methodological process that could clearly and decisively set out the scope of the research, identify sources that could provide leads to LGBT fantasy texts, work with these sources, and ultimately compile a list of potential LGBT fantasy texts to examine in detail

and compile into a genre canon. This chapter will therefore chronicle the development and use of this methodology throughout the research process, examining the theoretical and practical issues that arose at each stage as well as the effectiveness of the final research methodology in locating texts. Hopefully this detailed record of methodological development will be of benefit to researchers working with literatures similarly difficult to locate, including future researchers of LGBT fantasy.

Researchers on the same topic may define the scope and terms of their research differently, sometimes very differently, and this is particularly likely in an area such as LGBT fantasy where little previous academic work has been done. It is therefore incumbent on the researcher to make their research assumptions and practical methodological decisions as clear and explicit as possible, both as a matter of good academic practice and in an attempt to avoid unarticulated assumptions being automatically incorporated into future research methodologies. With that in mind, this chapter will discuss the methods and structures originally intended for use as well as those that were ultimately resolved upon, in order to illustrate the iterative nature of the research and justify the various methodological decisions necessary throughout. The overall course of this methodological development and corresponding research was as follows:

- 1) The scope of the research as well as its limitations were decided;
- 2) Sources for locating LGBT fantasy texts were accumulated and examined;
- 3) A longlist of potential canonical texts was created, later winnowed down to a reading list and finally to a shortlist;
- 4) The effectiveness of the methodology at locating LGBT fantasy texts was tested.

This chapter will follow the same pattern, examining each stage in turn and incorporating discussion of the benefits and flaws of the methodological approaches taken. The second strand of the research, where the discovered texts were analysed, will be presented in the third and fourth chapters: the third chapter will present a database containing a detailed presentation and analysis of each shortlisted text, and the fourth a discussion of the broader emergent trends within this uncovered genre.

### *Scope of the research*

Defining the exact scope of this research was difficult due to its goal of uncovering and establishing a canon for the LGBT fantasy genre: a genre with an impact that is difficult to assess, comprised of texts that are difficult to identify. It is nonetheless necessary for a researcher in this area to define, at least for practical purposes, which texts they will consider 'LGBT fantasy'. This is itself a political act: it cannot separate itself from the issue. To establish criteria for what is and isn't LGBT fantasy (or 'queer fantasy', an even more fluid term) is to set a precedent for future research; to construct any canon is to arrogate to oneself the authority to draw generic boundaries, to choose to accept some texts and to reject others. It is absolutely necessary, however, as the researcher must not only have a clear understanding of their research terms but must also train themselves in the indicators of these texts' existence: without an objectively-established list of indicators and defined terms no texts can be uncovered and no body of work will be available for analysis.

A number of forces intersect to define and determine a genre's canon: for example, publishers actively market some texts as genre fiction, and most bookstores have special sections for genre literature. Readers drawn to read fantasy will therefore come to look for texts marketed as fantasy, and to search for those texts in the appropriate sections of bookstores. Thus genre definition is often self-reinforcing: readers' tastes determine what publishers will publish, but those tastes are themselves shaped by what is actually published and read. Authors will market their work to publishers according to the genres available to them, which also affirms those genre boundaries: if sword-and-sorcery fantasy is being published, then that is what authors will submit to publishers. Historically, genre literature with LGBT content was very often not marketed as such, particularly by mainstream publishers. Similarly, LGBT sections in non-specialist bookstores are a relatively recent development, and would not even now necessarily include genre works. LGBT fantasy can therefore be considered a non-evident literature (or even a hidden genre).

When dealing with this non-evident literature, the problems of definition multiply. LGBT and queer texts, like fantasy itself, are difficult by their nature to define. A text can be read queerly, but that does not necessarily make it a queer text; similarly, 'the inclusion of gay



and lesbian characters or issues does not make a text queer' (Pearson, 1999, p.2). A text that has LGBT characters or deals with LGBT themes is not necessarily queer, and it is entirely possible for a text that has nothing to do with gender or sexuality at all to be very queer by, for example, questioning unspoken societal assumptions or breaking down commonly-accepted dualisms. Given fantasy's predilection for presenting the strange and unusual or re-presenting the normal in new ways, many fantasy texts could be considered queer in exactly that fashion, as discussed in the first chapter: hence the need to make practical decisions on the limitations of one's own approach and the meanings of one's critical vocabulary. This problem is compounded by the loose usage of the word 'queer' both as a theoretical concept and as a shorthand for a spectrum of gender and sexual identities. Rather than attempting to consistently define 'queer', researchers on the topic have generally focused on the queer potential of LGBT fantasy: with this in mind, this thesis uses the term 'queer fantasy' to refer generally both to fantasy that incorporates LGBT characters and the ways in which this literature can be read and interpreted queerly; the specific term 'LGBT fantasy' will refer only to the collected genre canon that is defined by its primary LGBT characters.

Returning to Joanna Russ's metaphor of the 'detective story': researchers of queer fantasy are in the awkward position – shared by some disciplines of the social sciences – of having to draw hard lines of demarcation around an inherently fuzzy set of characteristics. Despite the necessity of establishing clear research boundaries, the nature of this genre means that some such decisions may seem arbitrary. However, so long as they are made explicit and applied consistently, in many ways that does not matter. It is more important to draw lines and work within them than to agonise forever over where or whether the lines should be drawn: a useful compromise between theoretical idealism and the relentless pragmatism of a checklist. With this in mind, a working set of practical criteria was established for potential canonical texts. Although the iterative nature of this research meant a number of decisions had to be made on a case-by-case basis, the following list was used as a baseline.

This research sought to locate:

- 1) Novels;
- 2) Written in the English language;
- 3) Within the genre of fantasy;

- 4) Published in or after the year 1987;
- 5) Published in or before the year 2000;
- 6) With a primary character who is lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender, and/or otherwise queer as regards sex, gender and/or sexuality.

The restriction to novel-form works only was both a theoretical and a practical decision. Fantasy novels are a long-established form, have their own generally accepted canon of standard classics, and enjoy a large readership. Due to their length, they arguably offer greater scope for characterisation as well as more detailed exploration of social, cultural, and personal issues than shorter forms permit: this is a great boon to researchers examining social and cultural trends. Finally, the publication records of novels are more comprehensive and intact than those of shorter or less-established forms within the genre, which made them easier to locate both within records and as physical texts.

The decision to work solely with English-language novels was similarly practical. Apart from the difficulties inherent in working across multiple languages, which would render any approach entirely dependent on a researcher's linguistic ability, there is a degree of homogeneity in publishing and reading practice across the Anglophone world that makes it easier to validly compare cultural representations, which can vary significantly by country and region. Within English-language fantasy changes in LGBT representation, while not homogenous across the literature, can thus be examined as part of the same broad cultural shifts within the time period of investigation. The drawback to this criterion is that it rules out a wide variety of potential texts, limiting the canon thus created to being, effectively, a Western Anglophone one. It was felt this was unavoidable given the practical difficulties of taking a broader approach; also, being culturally and linguistically bounded does not negate a canon's utility or its validity within its own contexts.

Whether a text belonged to the genre of fantasy was a more difficult criterion to apply. In the late 1980s the distinctions between fantasy and science-fiction among readers and writers were often vague, where they existed at all, and it was common to see novels dealing with, for example, medieval-style quest adventures set on a recognisable post-apocalypse Earth, or sorcerers whose magical power is revealed to be rooted in ancient alien artificial intelligences (such as in Janny Wurts's 'Cycle of Fire' series). Often reviewers themselves found it difficult to classify these texts: Storm Constantine's

'Wraeththu' series is alternately classed as science fiction, horror, fantasy, or science fantasy. In general, where a text was reviewed as fantasy, marketed as fantasy, or listed as fantasy in one of the sources consulted during the research for this chapter, it was considered fantasy for the purpose of longlisting. This research limitation has the additional function of clearly delineating that the genre of fantasy is central to this investigation. Rather than focusing on the presence of the fantastical within LGBT literature, or the use of fantasy elements in works that are primarily LGBT in theme, the intent of this research is to focus on the emergence and representation of LGBT characters within the established genre of fantasy.

Beginning the research with the year 1987 was a difficult decision based on multiple complex factors. To examine the emergence of LGBT/queer characters in fantasy, and the concurrent emergence of LGBT fantasy as a recognisable genre, it would be ideal to have a time period that encompassed the first LGBT main character in a fantasy novel. However, as mentioned in the first chapter, it is very difficult to make any such absolute statements about a subgenre so rooted in subjective definition, and the previous research on the topic does not help to resolve this complication. For example, Balay considers Mercedes Lackey to be 'the first author working with a mainstream press to publish a gay high-fantasy series' (Balay, 2012, p.929), based on Lackey's 1989 *Magic's Pawn*. The multiple qualifiers – mainstream press; gay; high-fantasy; series – leave a great deal of room for other 'firsts' of the genre. Bosman and Bradford (2008) list four novels from as early as 1979 in their chapter on LGBT fantasy but consider 'the bulk of GLBT fantasy titles in a variety of subgenres' to have appeared 'between 1994 and the early twenty-first century' (p.178). Even these four 1979 titles can be contested: Diane Duane's *The Door into Fire* (1979) takes place in a setting where sexual orientation is not a meaningful concept; Samuel Delany's *Tales of Nevèrÿon* (1979) is a collection of short stories/novellas, not a novel; Elizabeth Lynn's *Watchtower* (1979b) and *The Dancers of Arun* (1979a) imply sexual orientation rather than make it explicit. This is not to say these texts (or at least some of them) do not deserve consideration: rather they demonstrate the difficulty of, and subjectivity inherent in, defining this genre's beginnings.

Turning to *Uranian Worlds* for guidance, the situation is no better. Garber and Paleo's (1983 & 1990) work attempted to collate and catalogue alternative sexuality in all science fiction and fantasy (up to the year 1979 for the first edition and 1989 for the second, which

included horror), with no declared start point. However, using *Uranian Worlds* to locate a beginning for LGBT fantasy literature is fraught with difficulty. As Garber and Paleo included texts from all three genres in their compilation, and did not separate them, they did not need to draw genre boundaries rigidly and it is often unclear into which genre a particular text falls. Garber & Paleo also included texts with minor characters, judging whether homosexuality was ‘a major component within a work’ (1990, p.xiv) on a case-by-case basis. Even if it were practical to read through every text listed in *Uranian Worlds*, Garber and Paleo’s work is representative rather than comprehensive: they gave ‘special attention to finding and annotating works that treat homosexuality with intelligence, validation, and verisimilitude’ (Garber & Paleo, 1990, p.xiii). *Uranian Worlds*, therefore, cannot guarantee a reliable ‘first’ for the literature.

It is, however, important not to lose sight of the fact that, rather than locating the first LGBT character in fantasy, the goal of this research was to track the emergence of LGBT fantasy as a genre: while a useful and interesting endeavour, finding the earliest LGBT fantasy characters was not directly relevant to this goal. Rather what was important was understanding the emergence of LGBT primary characters within fantasy and how that change in the larger genre led to the formation of an identifiable subgenre. Taking that into account, the year 1987 was chosen as a practical compromise between reaching back far enough in the literature to cover the movement of LGBT main characters into the mainstream of the genre while avoiding reexamining too much ground already covered by *Uranian Worlds*. The availability of a comprehensive resource for the years 1988-1991 (Robert Collins and Robert Latham’s *Science Fiction and Fantasy Book Review Annual*) was also a factor, as it allowed the overlapping time period with *Uranian Worlds* to be surveyed in particular detail and it seemed wise to make as much use as possible of such a significant resource. This research can therefore claim with confidence not only to reliably update Garber and Paleo’s canon but also to chronicle the time period within which LGBT fantasy grew from scattered and isolated beginnings in a larger genre to an identifiable genre in its own right. There was also an ancillary benefit to the slight overlap in dates: the reliability of this methodology’s ability to locate LGBT fantasy texts could be tested against Garber and Paleo’s lists for those years, and such a test is included toward the end of this chapter.

The year 2000 was chosen as the endpoint for this research as it was felt that by the year

2000 the genre of LGBT fantasy would have become well-established after more than a decade of material. Bosman and Bradford note that what they consider the ‘bulk of GLBT fantasy titles’ (2008, p.178) were published between 1994 and the early 2000s: the majority would thus have been published by the year 2000. Also, with Garber and Paleo taking seven years to update *Uranian Worlds*’ catalogue by a decade (an endpoint of 1979 in the 1983 edition becoming 1989 in the 1990 edition), and taking into account the large increase in LGBT fantasy titles published post-1989, a fourteen-year publication period (1987-2000, inclusive) was considered to come close to the practical limits of what could be investigated within a reasonable period of time. The year 2000 also presaged an enormous millennial increase in self-publication, print-on-demand publication via the Internet, and electronic-only works that fractured the already unstable boundaries of the fantasy genre’s canon, and *especially* the LGBT fantasy canon, making it exponentially more difficult to delimit and define. The year 2000 therefore marks the beginning of a transition to a very different reality of reading, publishing, and genre definition, which makes it a reasonable point at which to end the period of investigation.

Finally, the limitation of a text’s requiring a ‘primary character who is lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender, and/or otherwise queer as regards sex, gender and/or sexuality’ was a basic yet effective one. Most practically and usefully, it minimised the subjective nature of the research by explicitly shifting its focus from ‘queer fantasy’ in a general sense, which as noted earlier is almost impossible to define, to ‘LGBT fantasy’, specifically fantasy with primary LGBT characters. For the most part a character’s presentation or identification as LGBT/queer in one form or another is rarely subjective or open to interpretation (*whether* they are queer, that is: the *form* of that queerness is often subject to debate), unlike a text’s queerness or the presence of queer elements and themes.

Of course, no approach can remove subjectivity entirely, and arguably it should not: in research that is based on the close-reading and textual analysis of a genre, individual perspective is essential. For example, restricting the research only to texts where the terms ‘lesbian’, ‘gay’, ‘bisexual’, or ‘transgender’ are used of a primary character within the text would exclude the vast majority of the literature. For that matter, many fantasy novels take place within a cultural and/or historical context where such terms would be anachronistic. Therefore individual texts and characters still require case-by-case judgement, and the risks of projecting identity onto characters, and of conflating actions and identities remain: for

example, not all 'lesbian' characters would self-describe as such, and not all characters who have same-sex experiences in their text should be identified as 'gay'. The research decisions and compromises necessary to appropriately represent the scope of identities within this literature are discussed in further detail in the third chapter's section on coding.

In making the decision to limit the research to texts with LGBT primary characters, it was useful to consider where previous works drew the line. Bosman and Bradford took a broad approach, with all their entries having 'GLBT themes, characters, or settings' (2008, p.4): however, all of their entries were GLBT book award winners or nominees, which almost implies this by default, and they clearly had no need to limit their scope further. Garber and Paleo took a more restrictive approach, relying on the author to label the character in some way or to portray a physical expression of same-sex attraction. As they put it, 'while being flexible in our definition of science fiction and fantasy, we have been more strict in our definition of homosexuality' (Garber & Paleo, 1990, p.xiv), an approach that had the advantage of reducing interpretive bias on the researchers' part – Garber and Paleo noted, however, that this approach was primarily an attempt to avoid LGBT stereotyping. This research took a somewhat broader approach than Garber and Paleo, with a character's explicit identification as LGBT not being an absolute requisite for inclusion: if a character's identification and/or relationships within the text were either presented as or would be likely to be read as LGBT/queer, they were considered to meet at least the basic criteria for longlisting.

Adopting a broadly inclusive policy at this stage of the research allowed the inclusion of relationships, sexual acts, and gender performances that might not necessarily be formally coded as L, G, B, and/or T within their own texts and the sociocultural frameworks presented there, but that nonetheless might be reasonably considered for those labels in a wider context. Although readings of authorial intent can be contested and highly subjective, taking a broad definitional approach permits the inclusion of characters that an author might have deliberately chosen not to label. This relatively wide-ranging interpretation also had the benefit of significantly reducing the risk of excluding texts that dealt with their queer characters in a coy (perhaps closeted) fashion. It was considered preferable to longlist more texts than necessary (and remove them later if they were found insufficient in the winnowing process) than to risk overlooking material by adopting an overly-strict approach to applying the initial criteria. Whether a character qualified as a

primary character was very rarely an issue: as a rule of thumb, any character who received point-of-view for any part of the narrative or who had a significant impact on the plot met this criterion. Again, if a text was borderline on this point, generally the approach was to err in favour of inclusion, on the understanding that it could always be excluded at a later point. This is discussed further later in this chapter in the section on edge cases.

Finally, appropriately declaring assumptions requires the explanation of why certain research avenues were *not* followed. One such avenue was the examination of works by LGBT authors and/or the writing of such authors. It was decided that the focus of the research was explicitly on uncovering and analysing the texts themselves. With this in mind, the histories and sexualities of the texts' authors were not considered relevant to the research and texts were included with no thought of their authors' LGBT status.

Another such avenue was the assessment of secondary characters. This research and the catalogue it created, unlike *Uranian Worlds*, did not include novels with only secondary LGBT characters, a decision that was made for a number of reasons. The authors of *Uranian Worlds* were working in an era where the relative paucity of queer fantasy (and, indeed, queer science fiction and horror) meant that they could claim to catalogue every single LGBT presence within the genres, no matter how incidental, and be reasonably accurate in that claim: for much the same reason, primary LGBT characters were significantly rarer. When working with texts from the period 1987-2000, however, the incredible increase in main-character LGBT representation in that period was mirrored by a like increase in secondary characters in the literature: with secondary or incidental representation being significantly more common than primary representation, the number of these texts would be almost impossible to study rigorously in a work of this length. Even more pertinently, these texts would be almost impossible to locate in any sort of rigorous fashion: the presence of an LGBT main character is significant enough that it frequently draws comment from reviewers and attracts readers' attention, but any number of LGBT secondary characters might slip through the net, being easily seen as incidental to their texts. Also, on a more theoretical level, the goal of this research was to explore the emergence of a genre defined by LGBT characters taking centre stage as protagonists in their own right rather than being relegated to the roles of sidekicks and gay best friends, as often happened in the past. To devote significant attention to incidental rather than primary representation within the wider fantasy genre would not serve that purpose and would

ultimately dilute the findings of this research.

Lastly, although a detailed analysis of these texts' integration with their cultural and historical contexts and their impact on those milieux would have been a very interesting research avenue, this research resolved to focus primarily on the texts themselves, their representations of LGBT characters and relationships, and the identifiable trends of such representations. This decision to eschew a deep engagement with wider social contexts was based on several factors: the likelihood of textual interpretations being influenced by a predetermined idea of dominant cultural narratives; the possibility of work on such cultural readings overshadowing discussion of the actual representations present within the texts; the desire, ultimately, for the texts to at last speak for themselves and define their own contexts, rather than the reverse. With this in mind, the fourth chapter contains a brief discussion of the major cultural and historical shifts within the research time period to provide appropriate context for later discussions, but those discussions themselves focus almost exclusively on textual content and representation: it was felt this was an appropriate compromise.



### *Potential sources for LGBT fantasy texts*

Over and above its fringe position in terms of size of readership, LGBT fantasy is prone to invisibility as the intersection of two genres: LGBT/queer literature, and fantasy. Mark Kelly wrote in his review of *Bending the Landscape: Fantasy*, a collection of gay and lesbian fantasy short stories:

Since there is a sizeable 'genre' of general gay fiction, the trap is twofold for this book: stories can be fantasy with characters who 'happen to be' gay or lesbian but whose identity doesn't affect the fantasy story; and vice versa, stories with gay and lesbian characters which 'happen to' contain some slight fantasy element that doesn't depend on the identity of the characters. Only a few of the stories manage to fulfil both criteria in ways that are mutually interdependent. (1997, p.42)

Essentially, many of these texts might be called Heisenberg's queer fantasy: they exist in a position where they can be classified as either fantasy with mild queer elements or queer with only a touch of fantasy. How they are perceived depends primarily on the state of the observer; in both cases, they can be dismissed as not 'true' queer fantasy and classified out of existence. This is not to say Kelly's argument is invalid: it is an important and valuable point about the underused utility of combining thematic and generic characteristics. Many texts that combine LGBT content and fantasy content do not fulfil the queer potential inherent in such a fusion: for example, exploiting 'the similarity between being gay or lesbian in an often hostile society, and the estrangement brought about by contact with a fantastic unknown' (Kelly 1997, p.42). Indeed, some 'queer fantasy' texts would be effectively unchanged if one of those adjectives were removed. However, this also means that those who classify LGBT fantasy – not just academics, but publishers, reviewers, and readers – can be prone to the 'no true Scotsman' fallacy, applying their personal biases about what LGBT fantasy 'really' is or should be and including or excluding various texts from that category accordingly.<sup>3</sup>

Any LGBT fantasy text, therefore, has the potential to hide in one of its parent genres by

<sup>3</sup> A fascinating example is provided by the Goodreads.com list 'The Best LGBTQA Fantasy', whose creator/curator bluntly asserts: 'For the record, if Mercedes Lackey's Herald-Mage books show up on this list, I will delete them. They are hugely problematic and I don't think they're that well-written anyway.' Due to its having gone to such lengths to omit Lackey's novels, this research considered that source to have included them (or at least brought them to the attention of the researcher) by default.

'passing' as primarily LGBT literature or primarily fantasy and runs the risk of being deliberately or accidentally excluded from consideration *as* an LGBT fantasy text through personal or institutional bias. These phenomena are not unique to this combination, of course, but they have especial resonance for such texts through their evocation of queer themes of identity elision, labelling, and marginalisation.

This leads to the question of sources: where to find these LGBT texts within the larger corpus of fantasy? Although in some research contexts the brute-force solution of simply reading through all available texts and noting those which met the criteria might be valid, the sheer volume of published fantasy novels makes that both impractical and impossible. It is necessary, therefore, to consult external sources in order to narrow down the field. Fantasy as a genre is engaged in a lively process of deconstruction and redefinition moderated by readers, authors, reviewers, and publishers. Ideally, therefore, a comprehensive approach would avail of all of these in order to not only have the advantage of multiple perspectives, but also in the hope that the biases inherent in each approach might for the most part cancel one another. This section of the second chapter will therefore discuss the reasoning behind the different types of sources chosen for the research, as well as their utility and limitations.

The first, and perhaps most important, decision to make was on the use of active versus passive sources: in other words, whether to work exclusively with already-extant potential sources for texts, or to actively reach out to potential sources and use the material they provided. Garber and Paleo began their database of texts with the card-index notes of an academic acquaintance of theirs whose pet project it was. They then asked the science fiction and fantasy fan communities of the time to send them the names of recommended texts, which they proceeded to review and include in *Uranian Worlds* unless the text failed to meet their criteria. This approach, which combined active and passive sources, had a number of advantages. Soliciting recommendations cast the net extremely wide, and allowed a variety of perspectives and submissions to define the catalogue. It was a particularly good approach for a text designed for readers of queer speculative fiction, as it was primarily defined and collected by such readers.

LGBT and queer speculative fiction was far more an invisible literature in 1983 (or even 1990) than it is today, and would-be readers were without the benefits of fan websites and

Internet searches that would have pointed them towards these texts. *Uranian Worlds* clearly filled a gap in the market. In fact, there was such a need for a resource like it that in 1989, when it was out-of-print and difficult to find before its second edition, the fan magazine *Gaylactic Gayzette* published a thirteen-page summary of the first edition's entire bibliography, some 560 texts (Hummel 1989a, pp.9-21), as a stopgap reader resource. The queer sf fan community was so engaged with *Uranian Worlds* that they were directly responsible for its second edition: the Gaylaxians, a club for gay science fiction fans (and publishers of the *Gaylactic Gayzette*), organised a letter-writing campaign in January 1989 to petition the publisher to release a new edition. Later Paleo wrote to the Gaylaxians to thank them, and informed them that when she and Garber contacted their publisher about a second edition of *Uranian Worlds* 'the editor informed us that she had received a good number of letter [sic] requesting its release and that she was prepared to negotiate a contract. Your letter-writing was successful' (Paleo, 1989, p.10). Continuing the pattern of direct fan engagement, the Gaylaxian newsletter then issued an appeal on Garber and Paleo's behalf for fans to send them recommendations for the second edition of *Uranian Worlds* (Hummel 1989b, p.11). It would be fair to say that the second edition of *Uranian Worlds* was as much the fans' work as the authors': Franklin Hummel wrote that *Uranian Worlds* 'in many ways reflects the variety and vitality of gay fandom itself' (1989b, 11). This direct engagement with the fan community not only gave Garber and Paleo a sense of what their readers needed and wanted, it also gave them unrivalled access to the perspective of readers of fantasy, science fiction, and horror and allowed them to create a bibliography that was by readers and for readers.

While very effective for Garber and Paleo, their direct approach was felt to be ill-suited to this research. Fan communities for fantasy are significantly more fragmented and decentralised than they were in 1983 or 1990, and are vastly more difficult to contact directly or to survey coherently: they are not the tight-knit communities of the 1980s. Also, as noted, Garber and Paleo were writing for readers more than academics: their primary goal was to collate queer science fiction, fantasy, and horror for the benefit of readers searching for it. This means they were not particularly concerned about bias in their sources: they were trying to be as comprehensive as possible, but did not need to worry about being representative, as they were not attempting to give a coherent picture of the queer elements of the genres their text covered. In fact, as mentioned earlier, they acknowledge a deliberate bias toward positive representations of homosexuality in their

work, giving ‘special attention to finding and annotating works that treat homosexuality with intelligence, validation, and verisimilitude’ (Garber & Paleo, 1990, p.xiii). As the primary goal of this research was to represent the genre of LGBT fantasy as it actually was and is, rather than Garber and Paleo’s goal of providing a catalogue of positive depictions for queer readers, source bias is far more of a concern.

Another issue with Garber and Paleo’s approach of soliciting recommendations is that it gave a significant amount of control over their catalogue to their active sources: the fan community. While this was not a particular problem for Garber and Paleo’s work, and may in fact have been to their benefit, in taking an explicitly academic approach it is necessary to do things differently. In particular, it is important to seek out sources in a more consistent and reliable way in order to limit bias as much as possible and to limit as far as possible the control, explicit or implicit, that any particular group has over the outcome of the research. With this in mind, it was decided to consult primarily passive (already extant) sources rather than writing to publishers or fans seeking lists of material, and to work with as broad a variety of such sources as was possible. Although passive sources can and do contain their own biases, these could be anticipated and planned around rather than running the risk of active sources (who would be preparing their material with this research actively in mind) seeking to influence the research outcome directly for personal or political reasons. At worst, it was felt that enough biases acting collectively might cancel one another out and give a reasonable general overview of the genre.

The following broad categories of sources were therefore considered: book reviews, literary awards, and lists created by fans and organisations. Each of these had a number of things to recommend them in terms of their utility both for this research and for future researchers.

Contemporary book reviews were both the easiest and the most difficult of these sources to use: easy in that they are an intuitive place to begin this type of research, and because there are many of them available even within relatively small subgenres; difficult due to the fact that there is rarely an already-assembled set of reviews that exactly matches the criteria one needs. For the period this research was examining, 1987-2000, there were no comprehensive review sources that dealt solely or primarily with LGBT fantasy. Instead, it was necessary to work within the body of general fantasy reviews and attempt to locate the

queer texts, a process very much akin to panning for gold. Rather than looking for fantasy in reviews of LGBT/queer literature, this research focused on looking for LGBT and queer elements within reviews of fantasy, an approach that is recommended for a number of reasons. Firstly, it seems more appropriate, when examining the emergence of LGBT fantasy as a genre that emerged more from fantasy than from LGBT literature, to work within the greater parent genre to uncover elements of LGBT fantasy. Secondly, there is far more published fantasy material – and likewise fantasy review material – available, so drawing from that genre is more likely to offer a comprehensive perspective. Certainly examining the roots of LGBT fantasy or a similar genre within the wider frame of LGBT literature would be an interesting research proposition.

Within fantasy reviewing, the most expansive resource is the book-review section of the monthly speculative fiction trade magazine *Locus*. This publication provides the perspective of professional reviewers and experts on the contemporary genre, as well as indirectly highlighting which texts publishers were actively promoting (the texts *Locus* reviews are a subset of those sent in by publishers). Working with ‘professional’ reviews as a passive source therefore also indirectly provided an avenue through which to incorporate publishers’ perspectives on the emergent LGBT fantasy genre. *Locus*’s much shorter but far more comprehensive ‘Books Received’ listings, which are available online from 1984 onward, were also invaluable: the telegraphic five- to ten-word descriptions tend to use recognisable keywords and address core plot elements directly. While a reviewer may have time to be coy and discuss the delicate homoerotic implications of a text in a thousand-word review, the ‘Books Received’ listings are far more likely to present a blunt ‘Jewish lesbian contemporary fantasy’ (for Ellen Galford’s 1993 *The Dyke and the Dybbuk*).

However, a book-review structure had its drawbacks. Unfortunately, some of the longer-form *Locus* reviews were so coy about texts’ LGBT content that locating those texts became a very difficult exercise. Attebery wrote in *Science Fiction Studies*’ discussion of sexuality in science fiction that academics and critics must ‘reset the controls on our gaydar, from “detect” to “decode”’ (2009, p.385), but frankly for some reviews it is necessary for researchers to remain at the level of ‘detect’, and a finely-honed ‘detect’ at that. Carolyn Cushman, reviewing Mercedes Lackey’s *Magic’s Pawn* on its release in 1989, managed not to mention the fact that the main character is gay despite that being central to, and in fact comprising, most of the plot (Cushman, 1989, p.14). In fact, Lackey

was ‘the first author working with a mainstream press to publish a gay high-fantasy series’ (Balay 2012, p.929), beginning with this novel, which would seem deserving of mention from a reviewer – even a coded mention. Scott Winnett, reviewing a short story of Ellen Kushner’s set in the world of her *Swordspoint*<sup>4</sup>, where the two main characters’ gay relationship is a primary focus of their characterisation and of the text, writes of ‘Richard St Vier and his friend Alec’ (1991, p.65). Although the story does describe Alec as Richard’s friend, they share a bed, Richard admits he prefers Alec to women, and they explicitly and unambiguously have a sexual relationship: collapsing all of this to ‘friend’ is unjustifiable. Here we see a tendency of LGBT fantasy to remain hidden, to inhabit gaps and subtextual spaces and coy phrasings rather than to be explicitly declared. If a reader or a researcher must pay close attention to every single pronoun used in order to identify a queer text as such (true for one review of Catherine Cooke’s *Realm of the Gods*) then the reader who has not set their gaydar to ‘detect’ is unlikely to notice these texts. This tendency of reviewers also reinforces the research decision to focus on primary characters: if primary LGBT characters are this difficult to find mention of, and therefore detect, how many more secondary characters have fallen through the cracks?

It is tempting to give the reviewers the benefit of the doubt, to presume that they simply did not feel the need to focus on LGBT and queer elements every time they arose: certainly there would be the risk of over-focusing on relatively minor queer elements if that were the case. It could also be argued that these coy phrasings were an artifact of the era, and that the reviewer was speaking in a code that all readers would understand. However, neither argument stands up to more extensive analysis. It would make sense for a reviewer to draw attention to queer content only when they considered it relevant to a reading of the text. This approach would cause some problems for a researcher attempting to locate all such texts, but it would be an understandable reviewing decision. What actually seems to have happened, however, is that reviewers ‘overcompensated’ to the degree that even texts where queer elements were foregrounded and very significant had these elements elided, downplayed, or simply ignored. To give an example: *Science Fiction and Fantasy Book Review Annual 1989* (Collins & Latham, 1990) contains a detailed critical analysis of *Swordspoint*, over and above its regular review the previous year (which also did not mention its queer elements). The editors highlight *Swordspoint* as a pivotal text for its year of publication, and spend a significant amount of space discussing it. Somehow they

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<sup>4</sup> ‘The Swordsman Whose Name Was Not Death’, *F&SF*, September 1991

manage to avoid mentioning its gay primary relationship even once.

As for the argument that this coyness is located in a particular era of reviewing and rooted in the sociocultural framework of the late 1980s and early 1990s: even in 2000, Cushman writes (of Chaz Brenchley's 1998-2000 'Outremer' series, with a gay main character and two gay relationships) that 'a couple of non-standard romantic triangles develop' (2000, p.29). Yes, they do, but the reviewer's phrasing could mean anything at all! When pressed for space and time, reviewers are more likely to acknowledge a text's core queer elements, but it is both rare and wonderful to find Faren Miller declaring (of Allan Cole and Chris Bunch's 1994 *The Warrior's Tale*) that 'the unselfconscious portrayal of lesbian passion' adds to the book's 'rough intellectual honesty' (1994, p.67). At some point it is necessary to conclude that reviewers seemed to have fallen in love with using understated and teasing phrasing to describe LGBT texts, to the degree that they ignored opportunities to acknowledge LGBT presence where it would have been not just appreciated but appropriate. From another perspective, one might wonder if the texts have become too good at hiding themselves. Arguably readers of queer fantasy have trained themselves to notice such texts and subtexts, out of necessity if nothing else. However, this is an acquired skill and reviewing or writing with the presumption that one's target audience will have trained themselves to notice every hint is running the risk of sharply limiting a work's potential readership. The fact remains, however, that researchers working on LGBT fantasy must work to acquire the finely-honed gaydar that Attebery mentioned in order to pick up on the more coy and elusive hints in reviews, or risk missing out on texts: this is a situation where a broad inclusive approach is essential.

One set of sources that attempt to keep the spotlight directly on LGBT fantasy texts are the various awards in the subgenre that recognise good writing and portrayal of queer/LGBT characters. These grew significantly in number over the time period of the research: Bosman & Bradford (2008) comment that 'Between 1996 and 2000, at least one new GLBT award was established each year' (p.22). Awards such as the Lambda Literary Awards, Gaylactic Spectrum Awards, and the Tiptree Awards<sup>5</sup> focus on different areas but all bring texts to the attention of both reader and researcher. Rather than focusing on the winners, the nominations lists are most useful to a researcher, as they show which texts

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<sup>5</sup> Although not an LGBT award as such, focusing as it does on representations and interpretations of gender, the James Tiptree Jr. Award's longlists were nonetheless a very useful source of LGBT fantasy.

critics, publishers, or readers (depending on the nature of the awards) found worthy of note. This makes them a valuable resource in one sense, but also a narrow one: although award nomination lists provided a large number of potential texts for this research, they had significant overlap with all other sources: the three above-mentioned awards between them provided only two texts for the final shortlist that were not found in other sources. Bosman and Bradford (2008) used award lists as their sole source, but with the intention of only including the best and/or most popular literature for the benefit of librarians with limited resources: researchers attempting a comprehensive overview must draw from other sources. Award nomination lists are essential in building a picture of the LGBT fantasy genre, but are ultimately limited and insufficient on their own: what publishers and critics want to be read and recognised does not necessarily always correspond to what fans are actually reading or authors are writing.

This brings us to the final broad group of sources that were consulted: lists of queer fantasy novels, whether directly created by individual fans or compiled by professional or amateur organisations. This is superficially similar to the approach Garber and Paleo took: however, they solicited submissions from fans, actively engaging them in the process; instead, this research worked with already extant lists. This has the advantage of assessing what fans consider part of the queer fantasy subgenre passively, rather than through direct responses, which are more likely to be shaped by the process of asking. A number of problems arise with this approach nevertheless, including potential bias, overrepresentation of popular texts, and lists contaminating one another, but as with *Uranian Worlds* it is useful to cast the net widely to begin with and narrow down the set of 'potentially queer' texts later. The quality of these lists can vary massively, from pet projects not dissimilar to the box of index cards with which Garber and Paleo began to lists on the website Goodreads.com where books are voted upon by readers. This strategy allows a researcher to include as many and as varied sources as possible to have the best chance of locating queer fantasy texts, but runs the risk of multiple sources cross-pollinating, giving the impression of some texts being far more popular and influential than they actually are.

There were other sources available, of course, some of which are harder to classify: a detailed breakdown of the sources used and their effectiveness will follow in the next section. Examples of these more obscure sources include the website GLBTFantasy.com, whose dedicated volunteers spent years reviewing as many LGBT fantasy texts as they



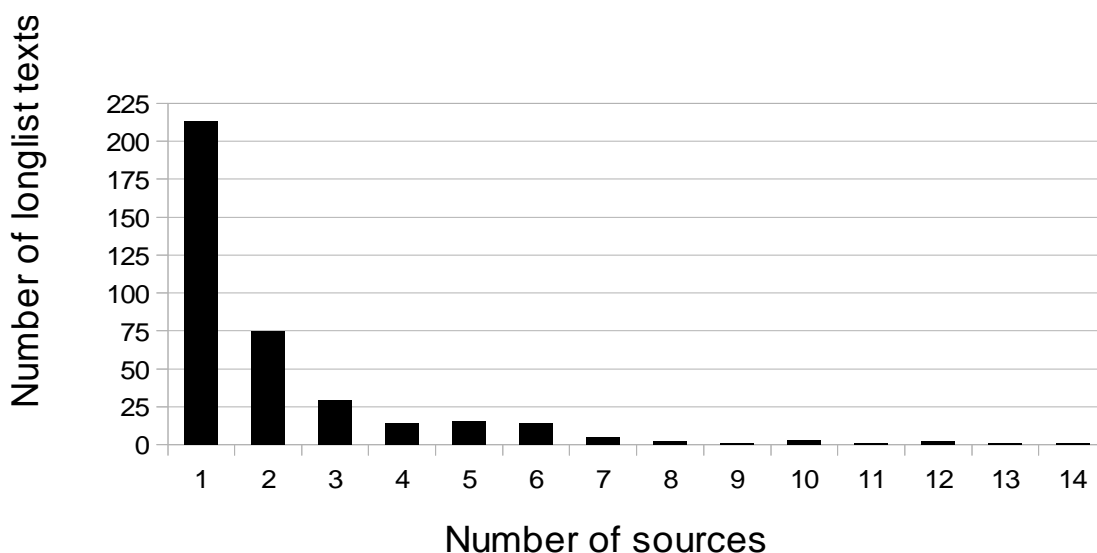
could; the library catalogue of the New York Gay and Lesbian Center Library, with a surprisingly large fantasy collection; recommendations by the staff of the Merrill Collection of Speculation, Science Fiction, and Fantasy in Toronto (a single exception to the rule of ‘no active sources’, out of courtesy and due to the fact it was prepared unasked). There are many unexpected potential sources of primary literature, and once one’s research is operating within defined boundaries it is a valuable strategy to incorporate as many such sources as possible. If a novel does not meet the criterion of having a primary LGBT character, this quickly becomes evident when working with it. Therefore false positives are far less of a concern than they might otherwise be: rather, false negatives are the worry, where texts that should have made it into a researcher’s database might not have. Unfortunately there is no way to tell whether some hypothetical perfect research text has been overlooked. Therefore the recommended approach remains to err on the side of overinclusion and winnow the final lists later.

Two sources that might be expected to have been used were deliberately omitted: namely, Garber and Paleo’s *Uranian Worlds* (1983 & 1990) and Bosman and Bradford’s *Gay, Lesbian, Bisexual, and Transgendered Literature: A Genre Guide* (2008). *Uranian Worlds* was not used as a source because, as mentioned earlier, the years of overlap (1987-1989) between this research and *Uranian Worlds* offer an excellent opportunity to assess the effectiveness of this research’s methodology: it was felt that an attempt to update the canon begun by Garber and Paleo should be able to stand on its own merits without using their material, and any flaws in the methodology would be made evident if there were glaring omissions. Bosman and Bradford’s genre guide was excluded for the simple reason that their texts were drawn exclusively from award nomination lists, all of which were already used as sources for this research: therefore their potential texts would be redundant. That being said, the texts they listed were also useful for cross-checking purposes: as these were the most prominent texts of LGBT fantasy literature, any omissions of these from the final list would suggest significant methodological flaws.

### *Longlist and its winnowing*

The sources consulted over the course of the research were sorted into the following categories: awards (nomination lists); book reviews; reading lists; fan lists; books (published collections of book reviews); book listings (this refers to the online 'Books Received' listings of Locus, which fall somewhere between publication data and book reviews); librarian recommendations (two bibliographies/reading lists compiled by librarians, plus the aforementioned books recommended by the staff of the Merrill Collection). A complete list of the 45 sources used in the research, with working notes and source reference codes, is available in Appendix A. Only 41 of these sources provided useful data, but all are included for the sake of completeness and as an aid for future researchers. An additional 'source', entitled 'Prequels, sequels, series' was added to the data to mark a number of texts added by the researcher due to their being sequels or prequels to texts already on the longlist: it was felt that such texts were *de facto* worthy of consideration, particularly because many sources would often not include or review every book in a series, instead including only a single representative text. Some sources provided sets of 'sub-sources': for example, the website Goodreads might be considered a source in itself, but so might each individual list. Where these sub-sources could be easily separated and treated as distinct sources, this was the approach taken.

After deciding which sources to use in the research, working to compile a longlist of texts was a relatively simple process. To limit the need for individual interpretation on the part of the researcher, a clear sorting process was employed in choosing whether to add potential texts to the longlist. Where such texts were already on a list of LGBT/queer literature, appeared to be of the genre of fantasy, and fell within the time period 1987-2000, they were automatically added to the longlist unless the source made it clear the novel had no primary LGBT characters: the only source of interpretative ambiguity, therefore, was whether a text fit the criterion of belonging to the fantasy genre. As before, this research erred on the side of inclusion when compiling the longlist. In order to identify potential texts when working with broader sources such as book reviews it became necessary to pay close attention to aspects of the reviews such as pronoun use, character names, and the aforementioned coded terminology that was often used to denote a queer presence: this meant a greater degree of discernment and interpretation was required on the researcher's part.



*Figure 1.* Number of sources per longlist text. This figure breaks down the 376 texts on the longlist according to how many of the 41 useful sources listed them.

After correcting for issues such as the same text being listed under multiple titles, listed years of publication being incorrect (often due to reprints) and thus ruling out texts thought to meet the criteria, and a series being accidentally listed as a single text, the longlist contained 376 texts. The number of sources that listed each text is displayed in Figure 1 above. As can be seen, a small number of texts were derived from many sources but the vast majority of longlisted texts had only a few, with more than half the texts on the longlist being found in just one of the 41 sources that provided texts. The mean number of sources per longlisted text was 2.17; the median number of sources was 1; the most common number of sources (mode) was also 1. This data suggests the existence of a small cluster of highly-popular texts (and infers a great deal of source cross-pollination for those texts), but with the majority of the texts on the longlist being far more obscure and/or marginal in terms of their position in the genre’s canon.

Once this longlist was compiled and finalised, it was reduced to an interim reading list of texts the researcher was to read in depth and analyse. This reduction, or winnowing, was performed in two ways: first, a number of judgement calls about genre definition and boundaries were made and applied consistently to the list; second, each remaining text was researched in some detail by reading bibliographical information, plot summaries, and reviews in order to cross-check whether it should remain on the list or if it had been added

to its original source (or derived from that source) in error.

The first major judgement call was to exclude collections of short stories. This not only upheld the original decision to work only with novels, it also avoided situations where some short stories in a collection were published within the research time period while others were not. In the early stages of the research there was some debate over whether to include short story collections: hence they are overrepresented on the longlist (over 60 texts) and primarily confined to the earlier years of the time period. This overrepresentation may also slightly skew the data in terms of the utility of various sources that focused heavily on short stories as well as novels (for example, *Locus* has a dedicated section for reviewing short stories). Unfortunately the iterative research process used made this unavoidable; this bias is not present in the shortlisting data, as the short stories had been removed by that point..

Science fiction and horror, of course, were excluded by the fundamental criteria of the research: however, it was necessary to make a number of broad judgements on what was to be considered science fiction or horror. One important judgement was that novels of vampires and werewolves fundamentally belonged to the genre of horror (and perhaps the broader tradition of the gothic), rather than fantasy. To allow for exceptions and edge cases, the presence of vampires and/or werewolves in a text did not automatically exclude it: if there were other fantasy elements present, decisions could be made on a case-by-case basis (a setting such as Pratchett's *Discworld*, for example, contains both vampires and werewolves but is nonetheless a fantasy); what excluded a text automatically was if it was clearly a 'vampire novel' or 'werewolf novel'. In much the same vein, generic (and frequently undefined) novels of supernatural horror or supernatural evil (usually novels of haunting and/or possession) were classed as primarily horror novels and excluded. In terms of defining and labelling a text as science fiction, the overt presence of classic tropes of science fiction were often enough to make a novel's genre position clear: novels of spaceships, alien contact, genetic engineering, and time travel (within an explicitly science fictional context) were all classed as sf. Mystery novels also made an appearance, and were excluded by default if they contained no fantasy elements.

Other judgement calls of exclusion that covered more than a single text included: self-published novels (small press publications remained); republications or translations of

books published before 1987 (in the latter case, the original text's not being in English was another reason for exclusion); academic texts (contravening the default criterion of 'novel'); magical realism (where this was sufficiently minor that there could be said to be no fantastical elements); texts where a gender-change occurred with no treatment of this as an aspect of identity nor any exploration of its implications (quite often these were either played for comedy or very brief experiences); where there was no evidence whatsoever, after researching the text further, that it had any primary LGBT/queer characters. Where a series included multiple genres, or had one or more novels that contained clearly fantasy elements despite the series itself not being considered fantasy, those books in the series that were considered fantasy were not excluded.

Where there was significant uncertainty as to whether a judgement call should apply to a particular text (very often, for example, it was unclear how minor an LGBT character was within a text), the text remained on the longlist, along with the general policy of erring in favour of inclusion. A minor difficulty that arose when working with texts derived from fan lists and reading lists in particular was that the publication dates given for novels were occasionally incorrect. Although these could later be verified, there were a number of cases where this resulted in texts having to be excluded from the longlist due to falling outside the time period of investigation; unfortunately this implies that there may be a small number of cases where the reverse occurred, and a text that should have had a publication date within the research period was excluded due to an error in its listing by the source. However, due to the extensive overlap between sources, and the relatively few longlist texts that had only a single source, it is expected that this would be only a very small number of texts, if any.

After these cuts, judgement calls, and exclusions, the longlist had been reduced to the interim reading list of 143 novels, which were close-read over approximately an eighteen-month period. While working with these novels extensive notes were made on their LGBT presence and queer content (initially in audio recording form, later transcribed and summarised). As a result of this close-reading, which doubled as a final iterative round of exclusion, it became clear a number of novels should be removed from the final list: in the majority of cases, this was because either the text was not fantasy or it did not have any primary LGBT characters. This resulted in the finalised shortlist of 107 novels, which are classified and analysed in depth in the third chapter. The full longlist is reproduced in

Appendix B, and the final shortlist is included (separately) in the References section. The breakdown of the final shortlist according to the number of sources is shown in Figure 2. Although this data still contains a large proportion of single-source texts (mode = 1), the broader trend (median = 2) has shifted away from texts with just one source. With a mean number of sources per text of 3.30, there is some evidence of greater agreement between sources for shortlisted texts: this is consistent with the concept of a genre canon based on mutual agreement and definition between disparate sources, as the more likely a text is to conform to the mutual understanding of a genre of LGBT fantasy the more likely it is to be listed in multiple sources. All texts on the longlist derived from eight or more sources (eleven texts in total) happened to progress to the shortlist, further supporting this theory.

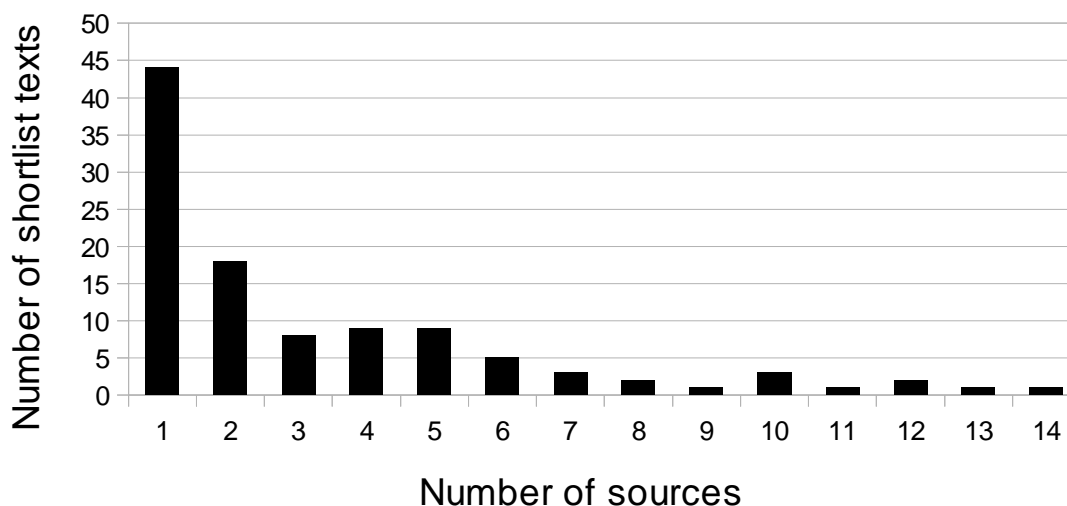


Figure 2. Number of sources per shortlist text. This figure breaks down the 107 texts on the shortlist according to how many of the 41 useful sources listed them.

An unexpected issue that arose at this stage of the research was the difficulty of locating the entirety of the reading list: as many of the novels were out of print, had a limited reach when originally published, or were never published in Ireland or the UK, there were practical difficulties in obtaining access to them. The Trinity College Dublin Library (a copyright library that receives copies of all books published in the UK and Ireland) provided approximately one-third of the texts on the reading list; a research visit to the Merrill Collection of Science Fiction, Speculation, and Fantasy in Toronto, Canada, gave access to a little over one-third; the remainder were acquired through a special order by the

Merril Collection, were present in the researcher's personal collection, or were purchased online. At one point it was necessary to arrange the loan of a collector's personal copies of two texts. These difficulties should be borne in mind by future researchers, as accessing these texts was a nontrivial endeavour and took a significant investment of research time and resources over and above those needed to work with and analyse them. Very fortunately, however, it was possible to obtain access to every text on the reading list.

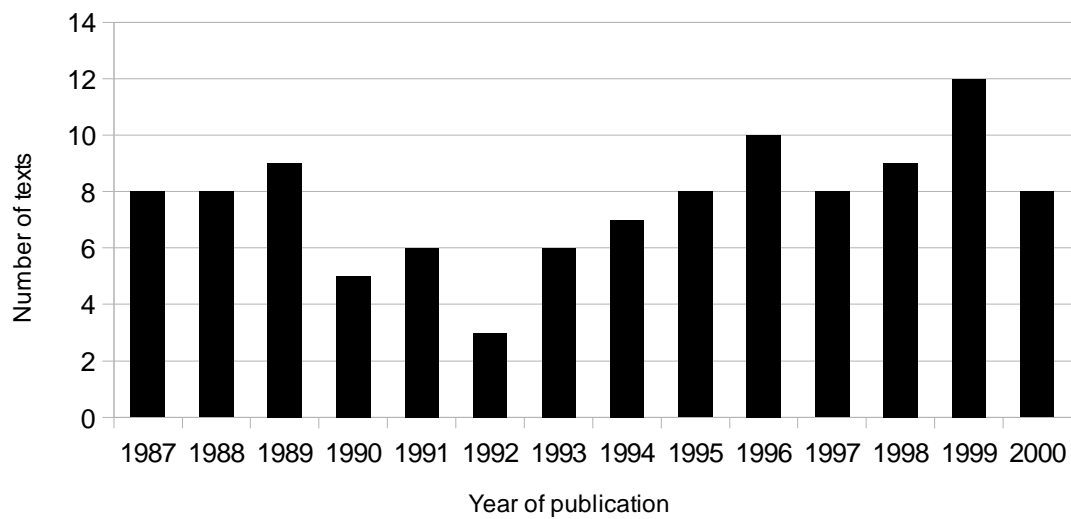
The relative impact of the 45 different sources used in the research (41 of which provided texts) on the final lists is intriguing, and is presented in Table 1 below. It can be seen that although several sources provided a vast number of texts to the longlist, another useful metric for a source's value is how many *unique* texts it provided to the longlist and shortlist: texts that otherwise would have been overlooked due to their absence from all other sources. Fan reviewers and fan lists were especially useful in this regard. Although there was a significant degree of overlap across all sources, the number of texts with a single source – as well as the number of texts whose only 'source' was being the sequel to another text on the list – shows the difficulty of comprehensively surveying the literature: omitting even a single source risks the omission of texts not present in any other source.<sup>6</sup> The variations in usefulness between ostensibly similar sources, such as different Goodreads lists or different reviewers from GLBT Fantasy Fiction Resources, shows the importance of assembling a wide variety of sources, paying attention to the specific needs of the research when matching appropriate sources, and assessing the impact of the various strands of these sources separately.

Finally, it was possible to chart the number of texts published in each year of investigation: this is displayed in Figure 3 below. This data supports Bosman and Bradford's claim that 'the bulk of GLBT fantasy titles' appeared 'between 1994 and the early twenty-first century' (2008, p.178): a significant and consistent increase is evident from 1994 onwards. From 1987 through 1993 an average of 6.4 LGBT fantasy novels were published each year: this jumps to an average of 8.9 for the period 1994 through 2000. As 1993/1994

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<sup>6</sup> The only gap in the shortlist discovered during the course of the research was that of Stirling, Meier & Wehrstein's *Shadow's Son* (1991), from the same series ('Fifth Millennium') as Stirling & Meier's *The Cage* (1989), which made the shortlist. As the five other books in this series either lie outside the research period or do not have a primary LGBT character, and several were reprinted within the period of investigation (making the year of first publication difficult to confirm), this omission is perhaps understandable. It does, however, reinforce the importance of following up on all possible 'Prequels, sequels, and series' texts when conducting similar research.

marks the midpoint of the period under investigation in this thesis, this suggests this research has succeeded in focusing on the period of greatest growth and change in the genre. The data also shows that LGBT fantasy texts were being consistently published all through the research time period, with no 'empty' years or extreme droughts: 1999 boasts 12 shortlisted texts out of 107, a relatively modest high point, and even the lowest point of 1992 (itself a sudden dip) can muster 3 texts. This suggests a stable and growing genre rather than a fad.



*Figure 3.* Shortlisted texts broken down by year of first publication.



Table 1 – *Numbers of texts provided by each source to the longlist and shortlist.*

Source	Category	# L	Unique L	# S	Unique S
Locus Magazine Jan 1987 – December 2000	Book reviews	104	39	39	6
Locus Online Index of Science Fiction 1987-2000	Book listings	78	31	10	1
eRIK's Mega List of Queer Fantasy and Sci-Fi	Reading list	73	35	17	7
GLBT Fantasy Fiction Resources – Finder	Book reviews	63	12	42	8
Lambda Sci-Fi Recommended Reading List	Reading list	53	2	23	1
Lambda Literary Awards (sf & fantasy categories)	Awards	48	5	10	1
Goodreads: 'Best Fantasy Books with Gay Main Characters'	Fan list	39	4	31	2
Goodreads: 'LGBT Sci-Fi and Fantasy'	Fan list	31	6	16	1
GLBT Fantasy Fiction Resources – eRIK	Book reviews	30	6	14	0
Gaylactic Spectrum Awards nominees	Awards	26	0	13	0
Books recommended by Merril Collection staff	Librarian	24	8	8	0
Tiptree Award Winners	Awards	23	4	9	1
Prequels, sequels, series	Contextual	21	21	12	12
GLBT SF, Fantasy, and Suspense Literature	Reading list	20	2	14	0
New York Pat Parker / Vito Russel Gay & Lesbian Center Library Catalogue	Librarian	17	2	4	0
Shergood Forest Gay Fiction: Sci-Fi and Fantasy	Reading list	16	4	8	0
GLBT Fantasy Fiction Resources – Caitlyn	Book reviews	15	0	15	0
GLBT Fantasy Fiction Resources – MonkeyCMonkeyDo	Book reviews	15	4	4	0
Goodreads: 'Best LGBT Fantasy, Horror, and Science Fiction'	Fan list	12	0	10	0
Goodreads: 'LGBT Positive SFF'	Fan list	12	0	9	0
Science Fiction and Fantasy Book Review Annual 1988	Book	12	8	1	0
Science Fiction and Fantasy Book Review Annual 1990	Book	11	5	3	1
Christine A. Jenkins Young Adult Gay/Lesbian Bibliography	Librarian	9	3	3	1
Goodreads: 'The Best LGBTQA Fantasy'	Fan list	9	0	6	0
GLBT Fantasy Fiction Resources – kadewire	Book reviews	7	0	5	0
Goodreads: 'YA fantasy/sf novels with major LGBTQ Characters'	Fan list	7	1	3	0
Science Fiction and Fantasy Book Review Annual 1989	Book	7	5	3	1
Science Fiction and Fantasy Book Review Annual 1991	Book	7	2	3	0
GLBT Fantasy Fiction Resources – Kabada	Book reviews	6	0	5	0
Goodreads: 'Best Gender Bending Books'	Fan list	6	5	2	2
GLBT Fantasy Fiction Resources – Chris	Book reviews	2	0	0	0
GLBT Fantasy Fiction Resources – deepblueseas	Book reviews	2	0	2	0
GLBT Fantasy Fiction Resources – Melusine	Book reviews	2	0	1	0
Goodreads: 'Best urban fantasy with gay/glbtc characters'	Fan list	2	0	2	0
GLBT Fantasy Fiction Resources – reverdy	Book reviews	1	0	0	0
GLBT Fantasy Fiction Resources – RGB	Book reviews	1	0	1	0
Goodreads: 'F/F Paranormal and Urban Fantasy'	Fan list	1	0	1	0
Goodreads: 'Lesbian Fantasy'	Fan list	1	0	1	0
Goodreads: 'Lesbian Sci-Fi'	Fan list	1	0	1	0
Alternative Sexualities and Identities in Fantasy and SF Booklist	Reading list	0	0	0	0
GLBT Fantasy Fiction Resources – Amadis	Book reviews	0	0	0	0
GLBT Fantasy Fiction Resources – Levana	Book reviews	0	0	0	0
Goodreads: 'Books with Neuter Gender and Asexual Main Characters'	Fan list	0	0	0	0
Goodreads: 'Lesbian and Bisexual women (etc) Sci Fi'	Fan list	0	0	0	0
Goodreads: 'M/M Urban Fantasy'	Fan list	0	0	0	0

*Note.* #L and #S denote the number of texts a source added to the longlist and shortlist respectively. Unique L and Unique S denote the number of listed texts from each source which had no other source. 'Prequels, sequels, series' was a source indicator given to texts that were listed due to their relationship with other texts and not found in any other sources. Hence all the texts provided by 'Prequels, sequels, series' are unique by definition.

### *Edge case studies: inclusion and exclusion*

In order to appropriately illustrate the processes at work in the winnowing process, and the complicated and occasionally subjective nature of judgement calls and textual interpretation, this section will briefly profile a number of 'edge case' texts, whose inclusion or exclusion from the final list was not automatic and required serious consideration.

The first major edge case category was texts on which the researcher possessed very limited information. As noted previously, when it was unclear whether a text met the criteria of the research the practice was to err in favour of inclusion, as such texts could be winnowed after reading if it was clear they did not meet the criteria. Daniel Kane's *Power and Magic* and Simon Ings' *City of the Iron Fish* are good examples of texts that made the reading list for lack of a reason to exclude them: apart from their discovery in sources and lists that led to their being placed on the research longlist, there is little to no secondary evidence available about the LGBT content of either novel. Plot summaries of Ings' novel omit the (significant) queer content and relationships; no plot summaries of Kane's work could be found. Both texts were included in the final shortlist after reading made their queer content clear. A similar case that *was* excluded after reading was Rachel Pollack's *Unquenchable Fire*: although related to her novel *Temporary Agency*, which did make the shortlist, *Unquenchable Fire* has no LGBT main characters, a fact that was not clear before reading.

The fact that reading a novel would almost always remove any doubt as to its research eligibility meant that there was a great temptation to always default to including any vaguely questionable texts: the practicalities and limitations of the research made this temptation one to avoid where possible. When significant information was available on a 'questionable' novel, such as multiple book reviews, that information was used to make a determination on its inclusion. This was generally the case for the second major category of edge cases: novels that clearly met one of the two prime research criteria (fantasy genre; LGBT main character) but whose fulfilment of the second criterion was in question.

Geoff Ryman's *Was* and Nancy Springer's *Larque on the Wing* are both excellent examples of this second category, and were both excluded from the reading list. Extensive reviews

and award information was available on both novels. This led to the conclusion that Ryman's novel, while it evoked a fantastic atmosphere and explored the nature of fantasy narratives, contained no elements that were not themselves entirely mundane and therefore should not be classed as fantasy. Springer's novel, while it did contain supernatural elements and *arguably* contained a gay character, was judged to partake more of science fiction and/or literary fiction due to its major plot device being the main character's creation of psychic doppelgangers and her resultant transformation into a young gay man.

*Larque on the Wing's* exclusion draws attention to the fact that the enforcement of genre boundaries in such cases is fundamentally subjective, particularly in cases that fall outside the broad strokes of judgement calls such as 'vampires and werewolves do not qualify as fantasy'. While this is indeed the case, the goal of the research was at least to be consistent in such decisions and to justify them appropriately. For example, several novels with the plot structure of 'lesbians with psychic powers fight an undefined supernatural evil' were likewise excluded due to their supernatural elements partaking more of non-fantasy genres.

The final (smallest) category of edge cases were texts that, appropriately for a queer avenue of research, thwarted conventional categories to the degree that they had to be assessed on a case-by-case basis and it was not immediately clear even after reading whether they should be included or excluded from the final research shortlist. The most difficult example was Storm Constantine's *Wraeththu* novels, which tell the narratives of a hermaphroditic post-human race who (initially) reproduce by biologically altering human males and possess many stereotypically 'gay' traits. This series has consistently eluded generic classification: ultimately it was excluded from this research and considered more science fiction than fantasy due to its emphasis on narratives of the future rather than the past and its insistence on the psychic nature of any magical powers the characters developed.

There were other very complex edge cases. Richard Bowes' *Minions of the Moon* was ultimately considered horror rather than fantasy due to its themes, tone, and style, and thus excluded. Paul Monette's *Sanctuary* was included as it is intended as a fairytale of sorts about queer characters, despite all such characters being animals; however, Laurie Marks' series 'Children of the Triad' (beginning with *Delan the Mislaid*), where all characters are entirely nonhuman genderless hermaphrodites was excluded as its representations were

considered to diverge so significantly from human experience that it could not be said to possess an LGBT main character in any meaningful understanding of the term. Rather, it is an exploration of gender and sex roles through fantasy: intriguing and laudable, but outside the remit of this research.

In summary, the majority of edge cases in the winnowing process were the result of the limited information that was available about these texts without reading them; relatively few texts were especially difficult to classify once their contents had been assessed. This not only suggests the robustness of the classification criteria that were used, it also points to the importance to both readers and researchers of having access to basic classificatory and identifying information on LGBT fantasy novels: a lack it is hoped this research will go some way toward remedying.

### *Effectiveness test of the methodology*

As mentioned previously, one reason for using neither *Uranian Worlds* (Garber & Paleo, 1990) nor *GLBT Literature: A Genre Guide* (Bosman & Bradford, 2008) as sources was to use them instead to conduct a comparison to assess the effectiveness of the research methodology used. The first practical test was to assess how many of Bosman & Bradford's fantasy texts, compiled with the intention of collecting the most prominent and significant works in the genre of LGBT fantasy, had been included in the research lists. Their texts' inclusion on the longlist was considered sufficient to pass this test, as it was possible the researcher and Bosman & Bradford defined the genre differently and texts included by them might have been excluded by the researcher. However, if Bosman & Bradford's listed texts were not at least on the longlist, it would suggest a significant lack in the research.

Bosman & Bradford list 45 texts in their chapter on fantasy that lie within the time period 1987 to 2000 (excluding texts marked as reprints originally published before 1987). All of these 45 texts are on this research's longlist. Of those 45: one is an academic text (*Uranian Worlds*, in fact); five are short story collections; one is a collection of previously-published short stories; two were read and found not to have a primary LGBT character; two were judged to be not of the genre of fantasy. The remaining 34 texts are present on the final shortlist.

This result is encouraging: however, Bosman & Bradford (2008) focused on the most obvious and popular texts of the genre. A work of research that intends to be comprehensive, and a methodology designed to facilitate this, would need to pass a stricter test than simply having located those texts. With this in mind, a comparison was conducted with the entries of *Uranian Worlds* for 1987-1989 (the years of overlap). Firstly, a list of texts listed in *Uranian Worlds* for those years was compiled. For the year 1987, 34 novels were listed. Of these, 19 were not fantasy novels, leaving 15 potentials. The same process repeated for 1988 and 1989 gave 11 and 14 potentials respectively. Checking these combined 40 potential texts against the research longlist and shortlist shows that 25 were on the longlist (of which 14 made the shortlist). Of the 15 remaining texts, 11 were coded in *Uranian Worlds* as having lesbian or gay sexuality as 'not a major element' (Garber & Paleo, 1990, p.xiv) which would have excluded them from consideration. Of the remaining

four, one was originally published in French in 1985 and one was listed as horror by Garber & Paleo, leaving two.

These remaining two novels may represent potential omissions within this three-year period. Considering them, however, one is Jane Yolen's *White Jenna* (1989), the prequel to which, *Sister Light, Sister Dark* (1988) was added to the research longlist and later excluded. It is highly likely that if *Sister Light, Sister Dark* had made it to the shortlisting stage its sequel would also have been added (cf. previous notes on 'Prequels, sequels, series' source listing); it should also be noted that it, like its prequel, does not in fact meet the research's criteria. It, therefore, is not an omission. The second and final novel listed in *Uranian Worlds* but not in this research is William Burroughs' *The Western Lands* (1987). Researching reviews of this novel, it was found to be almost impossible to categorise in terms of its genre position, being as much a literary fiction as a fantasy or science fiction novel; it was also difficult to determine if it actually had an LGBT primary character (the series of which it is a part does have a gay protagonist, but this novel may not). Based on the general judgements made throughout the research process, it is likely this text would have made the longlist for consideration but not the shortlist (the texts that actually met the research criteria). This test against *Uranian Worlds* and *GLBT Literature: A Genre Guide* therefore upholds the effectiveness and rigour of the research methodology and the comprehensiveness of its inclusion criteria. As a secondary test, to assess if the research was capable of locating *more* material than Garber & Paleo's approach, the shortlisted texts from 1987-1989 were compared to Garber & Paleo's list (cross-checking in reverse). This process was slightly complicated by the fact that Garber & Paleo's dates are occasionally incorrect: for example, they list Kushner's *Swordpoint* (1987) as published in 1989. For the purposes of this test, if a text from the 1987-1989 period was included (regardless of correct date) it was considered to be present in *Uranian Worlds*. These years provided 25 shortlisted texts between them, of which 11 (distributed across all three years) were not present in *Uranian Worlds*.

The results of these tests demonstrate firstly that this research meets its goal of effectively surveying the genre of LGBT fantasy. In addition, they demonstrate that this research can not just claim to competently update Garber & Paleo's work: it is, in fact, significantly more comprehensive than *Uranian Worlds* within its own scope. On those terms, the methodology devised for this research can be considered a complete success.

## Chapter Three – Coding and the LGBT Fantasy Canon

### *Overview*

Having established the importance of examining the emergent genre of LGBT fantasy novels, then developing and implementing a methodology to locate these novels within the wider genre of fantasy, the next step was to classify and categorise the novels thus located. As one of the goals of this research was to establish an LGBT fantasy canon for the period 1987-2000 it was essential to clearly set out that canon once uncovered: this not only enabled deeper analysis of the literature in the later stages of the research but also created an accessible and useful resource for future scholarship.

With that in mind, this chapter opens with a brief discussion of how the collected literature was coded and classified, and the challenges and difficulties associated with this. It then moves onto the most important element of the chapter, and of the thesis: the reference database of uncovered 1987-2000 LGBT fantasy literature, presenting the 107 novels located through this research. Each text's LGBT/queer elements are clearly marked via a system of coding, with each entry including commentary on and analysis of the novel's LGBT content, how it is handled in the text, and how it relates to wider patterns of representation. This comprehensive and systematic presentation of the genre allows the novels' contents to speak for themselves through analysis derived from close-reading while also allowing broader trends in their coding and content to become clear for discussion in the fourth chapter.

### *Coding and database layout*

The primary functions of the reference database were to label and classify the texts within it and to present individual notes and critical analyses. The only two previous efforts toward constructing a reference database of LGBT fantasy were Garber & Paleo's *Uranian Worlds* (1983 & 1990) and Bosman & Bradford's *GLBT Literature: A Genre Guide* (2008). In order to assess which elements would be most of use, and to avoid reinventing the wheel, the classificatory methods and database layout used in both catalogues were investigated.

*Uranian Worlds'* system set the baseline for the coding system used to classify texts in this research. They used a letter coding system which assigned codes to texts based on their content as follows:

- F – Lesbianism or female bisexuality is a major component within a work.
- f – Lesbianism or female bisexuality is mentioned in the work but is not a major element.
- M – Male homosexuality or bisexuality is a major component within a work.
- m – Male homosexuality or bisexuality is mentioned in the work but is not a major element.
- X – Some form of sexuality that is neither heterosexual nor homosexual appears. Transsexuality, hermaphroditism, three-sexed aliens, androgyny, and vampirism are examples.
- ? – A question mark following the letter code indicates that certain elements of the work are open to interpretation (i.e., latent homosexuality, same-sex societies, and overtly suggestive friendships).

(Garber & Paleo, 1990, pp. xiv-xv)

This method was taken up as a simple and useful idea: among other benefits, it allows a reader looking for a particular type of text in the database to simply look for the relevant letter code. It did, however, require adaptation to deal with the newer literature. For example, a number of Garber and Paleo's terms are no longer considered correct, either because they are imprecise or due to changes in usage. Transgender characters, for



example, were folded into the category of ‘Some form of sexuality that is neither heterosexual nor homosexual’. Clearly updating was required: among other things, hetero/homosexuality is considered a sexual orientation whereas being transgender is considered a gender identity. Similarly, bisexuality effectively did not exist for Garber and Paleo: they were aware of it, but folded it into broader gendered categories. They really had only three categories: F, M, and X (the aforementioned ‘other’ category), excluding for a moment their sub-categories ‘f’ and ‘m’ which flagged texts of only minor interest (irrelevant to research that focuses exclusively on texts with primary LGBT characters). Significantly, their approach made no distinction between characters’ identities and their relationships.

Looking to Bosman and Bradford for an alternate perspective on database coding and layout, it was found that theirs was very much a librarian’s approach (understandably, given their work is a resource for librarians): the likely readership of a text, the awards it received, the subject headings it could be classified under, and ‘read-alikes’ (similar novels a reader might enjoy) all featured in their database entries. This was felt to be too cluttered for a work whose primary purpose was to present the discovered LGBT fantasy genre canon and its analysis in a clearly-laid-out format that made it easy to locate an individual text. In addition, a number of the elements Bosman and Bradford incorporated are irrelevant to a work with an academic focus. They did, however, use a similar letter-coding to Garber and Paleo (G, L, B, and T) to indicate texts of interest, which reinforced the utility of letter coding.

However, having decided to use letter codes to classify the database entries, a number of difficult definitional questions arose. ‘Gay’, ‘lesbian’, ‘bisexual’, and ‘transgender’ are loaded terms, and do not become less so when incorporated into literature and expressed through the characters of novels. A major problem is the distinction between interpretation and identification: if a character is read by the reader (or, in this case, the researcher) as gay, is that sufficient to label the text as such? Garber and Paleo would require an explicit statement of the character’s sexuality in the text. Their conflation of identities and relationships by raises further issues for a researcher seeking to classify a text: Is a female character who falls in love with another woman a lesbian? Is she bisexual? Is she simply feeling a platonic ‘woman-love’? And does the author’s intent or the reader’s interpretation take precedence? Can we only consider characters as lesbian, gay, bisexual, or transgender

if we are told so outright? Then the issue arises that what might be read (and indeed written) as queer might not be considered so by the characters involved, for the same reasons health authorities market their messages to MSM ('men who have sex with men') rather than gay and bisexual men, due to many men who engage in same-sex activity not identifying as gay. If two male characters are in a romantic and sexual relationship while claiming straightness, how should *they* be classified?

Bosman and Bradford (2008) took a common-sense approach to this definitional wrangling. Their interest indicators, as with Garber and Paleo (and this research) were based on the sexual orientation / gender identity of the main characters of the text. They note that 'The assignment of an interest indicator is admittedly based on subjective interpretations; however, in the larger context, the distinction between sexual orientation and gender identity is also subject to individual interpretations, as well as laden with sociocultural, linguistic, and political meaning.' (p.5) With this in mind, this research has taken the path of least resistance in most cases: if a text would clearly be interpreted as being 'of gay interest', or containing a relationship that could or would be read as gay (such as a sexual relationship between two men), it was coded G regardless of whether there was an explicit declaration of sexual orientation in the text.

The primary changes this research made to Garber and Paleo's coding system, other than an amended approach to definitions, were to introduce new codes differentiating between identities and relationships, and to restructure the letter codes generally. The codes ultimately used in this research were as follows:

**L      G      B      T      Q**  
**F      M      R**

The first five codes (L, G, B, T, Q) are used to denote individuals. L and G need no explanation. T was used to denote transgender characters (or characters readable as transgender – the fourth chapter contains further discussion on this complex topic).

B was used to indicate the presence of bisexual characters in the text, rather than introducing separate codes for male and female bisexuality. It was considered more useful

to flag the incidence of bisexuality in the literature than to distinguish whether each character is (for example) a 'lesbian woman' or a 'bisexual woman', which would have increased the granularity of the coding as well as making the database more difficult to read. In addition, as shown by the earlier discussion of classification, such distinctions would be impractical if not impossible to make for the vast majority of characters. Therefore the code B never occurs on its own: if present with the L *or* G codes, the gender of the bisexual character should be clear; if present with both L *and* G, the critical analysis of the text should clarify why the code is present and to which type/s of characters it applies.

Q was used to denote a character who did not fit into the above categories, but fell into the catch-all category of 'otherwise queer as regards sex, gender, and/or sexuality': in such cases the critical analysis should make clear why it is present. Q was also used for characters who fit in the other categories (which would therefore also be present) but who possessed a deliberate quality of queerness over and above their sexual/gender identities: characters written to be 'queer' in the academic sense of the word.

The second set of codes (F, M, R) are used to denote relationships. F and M denote relationships between women and men, respectively. Transgender characters were treated as their gender of identification for this purpose (and for categorisation as 'gay' or 'lesbian', where relevant). Due to the inclusive approach taken with coding identities, it was expected for it to be rare for F and M to occur in an entry without L or G, respectively, also being present (if the novel contained two women in a relationship – F – it would automatically also be of lesbian interest – L).

The code R was used to mark relationships that, while they may fit into the other categories (in which case those codes were also used), also had an unusual quality worthy of comment: for example, polyamorous relationships or group marriages would qualify, as would relationships incorporating strong elements of BDSM. As always with ambiguous codes, the critical analysis was used to make the reasons for its presence clear.

Where multiple codes applied all of them were used. In the event of a novel containing a group marriage between two men and two women, where all four characters have sexual contact / romantic relationships with the other three, then the codes L, G, B, F, M, and R

would all apply.

As for the critical analysis element of the database, both *Uranian Worlds* and *GLBT Literature: A Genre Guide* append a discussion to their novels' entries, moving between plot summary and close-reading analysis as appropriate but focusing more on the former. In this research, given its academic approach, the focus was on analysis, but relevant plot elements were mentioned as appropriate. Looking to another genre for an example of a database intended for critical analysis, Anthony Slide's *Gay and Lesbian Characters and Themes in Mystery Novels* (1993) considers 'some critical analysis' to be 'essential' (p.5): his style in writing such analyses – maintaining an academic tone while not disregarding the fact of the researcher's engagement with the text – greatly informed the stylistic approach taken in this chapter's analyses.

The critical focus of this research was on analysing the texts and their contents, rather than the lives or sexualities of their authors. Therefore the database entries do not generally discuss the authors' genders or sexual orientations, as these were not considered relevant for the purposes of the research. Given the queer significance of such an act, authors who chose to use pen names have had them respected rather than be 'outed' unwillingly.

Both Garber and Paleo and Slide arranged their databases alphabetically by author, and this seemed to be unambiguously the best approach. Slide as well as Bosman and Bradford included notes on related works and bibliographical issues where relevant in the database entries, and their example has been followed where appropriate. For the convenience of the reader, a brief page index by author was created, and follows this section.

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## **Anthony, Mark**

### **Series – The Last Rune**

Moving between contemporary Earth and the fantasy world of Eldh, this high fantasy series sees a relationship slowly develop between Travis, a bartender from Colorado, and Beltan, a knight of Eldh. This relationship is established more fully in the later novels, outside the scope of this research. The first two books of the series, discussed below, set the scene for a later relationship and construct Eldh as having no particular taboo against homosexuality.

#### ***Beyond the Pale (1998)***

##### **G**

Travis and Grace, a doctor, are separately transported from Colorado to Eldh and attempt to establish themselves there. Beltan, a native of Eldh, is devoted to a mystery cult with heavy Mithraic overtones that is associated with male homosexuality; it is clear he has no interest in women. There is a degree of sexual tension between Beltan and Travis, with hints of a possible relationship: Travis's openness to male sexuality is suggested but not fully explored.

#### ***The Keep of Fire (1999)***

##### **G     B     M**

Travis returns to Earth temporarily to investigate a mysterious plague while Grace stays in Eldh to fight it with healing magic. Unexpectedly for a novel with gay content, this vast (magical) plague spreading across North America has no (implicit or explicit) connection to HIV/AIDS. Beltan's relationship with another male knight comes to an end; the villain behind the plague is apparently also attracted to men, as Beltan uses seduction to get close enough to kill him. It is prophesied Beltan will face rejection from Travis when he confesses his feelings to him, but this is misleading in the best prophetic tradition. In fact

Travis feels that he can, perhaps, come to return Beltan's feelings and that whatever there is between them is worthy of exploration. An earlier encounter with an old girlfriend of Travis's suggests that Travis may be best described as bisexual.

### **Notes and related works**

These later books in Anthony's 'The Last Rune' series fall outside the research time period:

*The Dark Remains* (2001)

*Blood of Mystery* (2002)

*The Gates of Winter* (2003)

*The First Stone* (2004)



## **Arden, Tom**

### **Series – Orokon**

In this epic fantasy Jem, a young man spoken of in prophecy, attempts to recover the five magical crystals of the gods in an attempt to save his world. He is assisted by his friend Rajal and a large supporting cast. The series in general has a strong focus on perversion and wrongness, and although the queer elements are not written as being morally wrong, this colours their presentation. The societal morality presented in the series is a conservative and repressive one, reinforcing the characters' deviance. There is a consistent trend within the series of showing homosexual male violence, rape, obsession, and perversion, but almost never direct affection nor love.

### ***The King and Queen of Swords (1998)***

#### **G**

In this second book of the series, Rajal and a secondary character, Bean, have their homosexuality emerge within the text in troubling ways. Rajal joins a theatre troupe and has a sexual relationship with the two elderly men who run it, though it is unclear whether or how much he is being used or abused. He later falls in love with his straight friend Jem. Bean, a flawed character initially on the side of the villains, is obsessed with a friend of his, and sexually assaults him in his sleep on a regular basis.

### ***Sultan of the Moon and Stars (1999)***

#### **L G F**

A new character, Amed, a girl who dresses as a boy and seems gender-ambiguous (often called 'girl-boy') is introduced and is attracted primarily to women: her romance and resulting relationship with a princess is represented positively. The Caliph of the region uses castrated young men/boys as sexual partners. As a result, Rajal is kidnapped into a harem of boys, threatened with castration, and is raped: this is portrayed as assault but also

as the means through which he begins coming to terms with his same-sex desires; his resulting guilt and self-hatred is explored within the text. Bean continues his sexual assault, and is found out and beaten savagely for it. Rajal decides that he doesn't love Jem, he loves Bean: this decision is particularly strange given that the two characters had only met once.

### *Sisterhood of the Blue Storm (2000)*

#### **G T R**

A new character is introduced: Tagan, a eunuch. He (the pronoun used in the text) is represented as very androgynous, camp, and effeminate. It later becomes clear that Tagan chose to be made a eunuch, and that this is the closest he could come to changing sex, constructing him as transgender: eunuchs have a folk legend of a mythical enchantress who can truly change the sex of others. Rajal and Tagan have a brief sexual relationship, but Rajal's love for Bean is again emphasised. This is unconvincing and surreal in the extreme due to the fact that Rajal and Bean have only encountered one another once before in the entire series, and the majority of their interaction was between scenes and not presented in the text itself. Jem acknowledges and accepts Rajal's homosexuality in this novel, affirming their friendship and Rajal's importance in his life.

#### **Notes and related works**

*The Harlequin's Dance (1997)* – This first book of Arden's 'Orokon' series did not meet the research criteria.

*Empress of the Endless Dream (2002)* – This last 'Orokon' novel fell outside the research time period.

Tom Arden is a pen name.

## **Bailey, Robin Wayne**

### **Series – Brothers of the Dragon**

Two brothers, Robert and Eric, who happen to be accomplished martial artists, are transported into a fantasy world, Palenoc, which is disturbingly similar to a published horror novel of Robert's. They aid a resistance movement of dragon-riders against the assaults of a sorcerous female villain (the Heart of Darkness) and the monsters she has created. Palenoc is a world where the spirits of the dead are manifest and nonlethal combat is the order of the day, as the spirit of a murdered person inevitably kills their killer.

#### *Brothers of the Dragon (1993)*

There are hints from the beginning that Robert may be gay, but he is clearly not out to his brother Eric: Robert's friend Scott, who was shot outside a West Village bar, is discussed, and it is implied that they were lovers. Despite this, Robert falls in love with Alanna, a female dragon-rider, and she with him. This is portrayed as a standard romance, though there are mild hints that Robert's (implicit) homosexuality will doom it. The novel consistently implies a gay/bisexual sexuality for Robert rather than representing it directly in any way, but must be read in context with its sequels.

#### *Flames of the Dragon (1994)*

### **G B R**

Returning to Earth briefly, Robert's tense relationship with his parents is explored as he is arrested for Eric's 'murder'. Learning Scott may be alive in Palenoc and imprisoned, Robert undergoes astral projection to find him: taunted by the Heart of Darkness, he is referred to as Scott's lover. Robert's ongoing confusion as regards his relationship with Alanna is also explored, and it is made clear she fills a very similar role for him to the one Scott filled: whether Robert is best identified as gay or considered functionally bisexual is a confused notion in the text. Two secondary male characters, one of whom dies, are also represented as being in a relationship.

### *Triumph of the Dragon (1995)*

**G B M**

Robert is kidnapped and tortured both physically and psychologically by the Heart of Darkness. It becomes clear that he was sexually abused as a child, and also that he hates himself for being gay and refuses to acknowledge it fully, especially since Scott's 'death'. Robert also fears rejection by his brother Eric. The villain attempts to magically and psychologically reprogram him, recontextualising all of his positive memories of Scott as (falsely) abusive. Meanwhile, Alanna admits to Eric that she now knows Robert's heart belongs to Scott. Ultimately it is revealed Scott is alive, and he assist Eric in rescuing Robert. In the aftermath, a terribly damaged Robert and Scott, who is traumatised by use of dark magic, attempt to reestablish their relationship: it is made clear this will succeed, although Robert may never entirely recover. Eric admits to Scott that Robert's being gay is hard for him to accept, but reassures Scott that he has no problem with their relationship. A strong theme of overcoming abuse and psychological trauma is evident throughout: a final scene of Robert flying a mechanical kite-device in lieu of a dragon (being unable to bond to them) suggests a degree of healing without implying completeness.

#### **Standalone novels**

### *Shadowdance (1996)*

**G M**

Innowen, a disabled young man in a fantasy setting, receives a curse/blessing from a mysterious Witch which allows him to walk. However, it only applies at night and he must dance every night: these dances force those who watch to enact their darkest desires. This leads to his rape by his (male) caretaker. Later, after the narrative abruptly jumps forward a number of years, Innowen returns from adventuring and travelling with his companion Razkili, with whom he clearly has a very close emotional bond: the language and gaze used is both homosocial and homoerotic, and their nicknames for one another are 'Innocent' and 'Rascal'. The sexual and romantic tension between these characters is very

heavy, and increases throughout the book, with Razkili desperately wishing Innowen could dance for him. While working to oppose the Witch, Innowen confesses his love for Razkili, which is returned, and they slowly become lovers. It is made clear in the narrative that Razkili's darkest desire is Innowen himself, and he supports Innowen in defeating the Witch and throwing off her curse. In a twist of fate this results in Innowen being made whole, and he and Razkili set off into the unknown together.

The relationship dynamic between them is interesting, as despite Innowen's description as boyish and Razkili's rugged and masculine nature they are both clearly equal partners in their relationship. Innowen's disability in no way limits either his agency as a character or his sexual nature. A cultural concept of being tainted and made incapable of moral judgement by black magic, which Innowen is accused of repeatedly, has a certain amount of queer relevance. It is also noteworthy that the creation myth for the world involves two male gods striving against one another and then creating the world through a sexual act.

### **Notes and related works**

*Brothers of the Dragon* was given no identity or relationship codes despite being included in this catalogue. Although Robert's sexuality is implied throughout the text it is never made explicit, nor could the reader draw an unambiguous conclusion from his representation. This novel was included in the catalogue due to its contextual importance for the series, and due to the fact that the main character is in fact gay (and this is made explicit in later novels).

*Flames of the Dragon* was published in the UK under the title *Straight on til Mourning*.

*Triumph of the Dragon* was published in the UK under the title *Palace of Souls*.

## Barker, Clive

### Standalone novels

#### *Imajica (1991)*

G B Q M R

A man named Gentle and his former lover Judith become aware of the existence of other worlds (the Dominions) linked to Earth, and a conspiracy to prevent their being reunited with Earth: they travel separately through the Dominions. Gentle falls in love with a sexless hermaphrodite, Pie'o'pah, that embodies whatever the person with it desires most, and they are married. After Pie'o'pah dies, Gentle works to reconcile the Dominions and destroy the deity that originally separated them.

A minor gay couple are present, one of whom is dying from AIDS: they take on a larger role when the dead one possesses the living as an angel to pass on important information to Gentle. There are strong themes of identity, sexuality, and gender: a patriarchal male god displacing female forms of worship is a major part of the plot. Many of the characters attempt to find various ways to depart from the standard patterns of existence as represented by sexuality, gender, and the nature of reality in the Dominions: the necessity of violating these boundaries is a central element of the text. In particular, the final scene where Gentle and the spirit of Pie'o'pah transcend the limitations of the wheel-shaped linked Dominions by entering the space *within* the circle the Dominions describe is a deliberate triumph of queer expression and possibility.

#### *Sacrament (1996)*

G

In this novel set in contemporary Earth, Will, a gay middle-aged wildlife photographer, recalls his childhood and the literal demons of his past, whom he later moves to confront. Will's sexual orientation is central to both his identity and to the text, and its role in his development is examined in detail. It is also not coincidental that Will's work focuses on

chronicling near-extinct species, and that his nemesis Jacob's 'work' is to destroy them: the analogy to AIDS is made explicit. Jacob and his sister Rose, the nonhuman villains of the piece, are fascinating gender stereotypes who present as a stereotypical male/female duality but consistently skew that 'normal' message through incest, perversion, Jacob's repressed homosexual urges, and Rose's fascination with transvestites and transsexuals. Their eventual union as one alchemically-constructed being emphasises the falseness of their extreme gendered identities. The novel has strong elements of overcoming childhood trauma and abuse, as well as discussion of the queer death drive and the nature of creation. Significant space is devoted to the appropriateness of gay artists and writers making public and political statements through their work, which is clearly at least in part self-reflection by Barker. The nature of gay social existence, queer identity performance, and the AIDS epidemic as an extinction event are the three threads at the heart of the novel.

## Baudino, Gael

### Series - Dragonsword

Suzanne, a graduate student from Earth, is brought with her supervisor Braithwaite to a faux-Dark Ages fantasy world he has (unknowingly) imagined into existence, where he is a stereotypical and misogynistic hero, Dythragor. This mantle settles on her as well: she takes a new name, Alouzon, and becomes his successor as Dragonmaster after he dies. The series avoids the stereotype of the created world being fundamentally unreal: rather, although it was created through a fantasy, it became as real as Earth, and this paradox causes crises for a number of its residents who realise they have no childhood memories and have existed for less than a decade. Both Suzanne/Alouzon and this created world are haunted by the mistakes of the past and the flaws of its creator, and she struggles to live up to this responsibility and to make amends to his (and ultimately her) creation over the course of this highly feminist work.

### *Dragonsword (1988)*

#### T Q

Suzanne and her mentor are transported by the titular Dragon, who is primarily a plot device, to the kingdom of Gryllth, based on her mentor's romanticised ideas of the past. Suzanne/Alouzon faces extreme institutionalised misogyny in his idealised patriarchal society, while attempting to end a pointless war with Corryn, a kingdom with gender equality who are considered faceless enemies primarily due to Dythragor's need for someone to fight. Strong feminist and gender themes are evident: Braithwaite is a caricature of misogyny, has no respect for either Suzanne as a graduate student or Alouzon as a Dragonmaster, is a rapist, and the society he has unknowingly created manifests these values. The predominant imagery of Alouzon's quest for the Cup (as the Grail or *sangreal*) is used to represent both femaleness and wholeness/healing. Although the queer elements are minor a significant incident occurs before the climactic confrontation, where a powerful work of enemy magic permanently transforms a company of elite (male) warriors to women. Although these are not transgender characters as commonly presented, their



reactions to this trauma and resulting social and psychological difficulties are explored in detail, and a number become primary characters in later books.

### *Duel of Dragons (1991)*

**L T Q F R**

After Braithwaite's death, the world he created is changing: Suzanne/Alouzon as its guardian must deal not only with the discovery of a new continent shaped by her beliefs and experiences but also Braithwaite's estranged wife from Earth, Helen. A new society based on an interpretation of pagan/neopagan worship is presented, which promotes gender equality but rejects homosexuality: a natural consequence of considering a male/female sexual binary as integral to the world. A priestess of the Goddess is used to explore this view and eventually reconciles it by situating a male/female duality within individuals rather than relationships, squaring the circle in a very queer way.

The characters transformed into women by magic become very prominent, leading to a great deal of discussion on gender as well as a critique of trans-exclusive feminism (represented by Helen, who like her former husband is something of a strawman in this regard, with a hag/healer duality in her personality). These transformed characters are unusual as they are not transgender characters per se, but have effectively become so: they are represented as having male gender identities (at least initially) but female-sexed bodies. Rather than a transgender character being transformed to physically match their gender identity, as one might expect from a fantasy of transformation, instead Baudino presents cisgender characters who have been transformed into transgender characters. Two of these characters, Marrget and Wykla, have their personal journeys explored in detail as they assist Alouzon: Marrget's gender identity shifts and she feels comfortable entering a relationship with a man (changing her name to Marrha), while Wykla enters a relationship with a woman and feels more grounded in her femaleness thereby. Facing and overcoming the pain of the past is a major theme.

### *Dragon Death (1992)*

**L T Q F**

Suzanne has been returned to Earth in her Alouzon identity/body for the first time, blurring the lines of identity both for herself and between the worlds: it becomes clear both she and Helen have died on Earth in a confrontation in *Duel of Dragons*. Wykla and her lover Manda come to Earth to rescue her and to obtain her help in preventing a war, further breaking down the barriers. It is made clear that Wykla, through her relationship with Manda, has become comfortable in her female identity and her sexuality. Ultimately, the hints that Braithwaite and Suzanne are the God and Goddess worshipped in this world culminate in Alouzon ascending as the Goddess of the created world, granting it restoration from the horrors of war and hope for renewal: this is consistent with the themes of overcoming the past and feminist empowerment, while her gradual withdrawing from the real and mundane is an interesting commentary on the tensions of maintaining a secondary reality and the nature of fantasy.

### **Standalone novels**

#### *Gossamer Axe (1990)*

**L      G      B      F      M**

Christa, a centuries-old Irish harper, establishes an all-female rock band in order to battle a fairy musician and free her lover Judith from the Sidh. Christa's perspective on sexuality is interesting, coming as she does from an era where neither contemporary terms such as 'lesbian' nor the related social categorisation of queerness existed: she happily accepts the label of lesbian as descriptive of her primary relationships and feelings, but the fact that she is also attracted to (and sleeps with) men on occasion suggests a bisexual label. As with all of Baudino's work, there are very strong feminist elements and the complex relationships (both external and with one another) of the female characters are explored in depth: many are abuse survivors or otherwise damaged, and find healing as a group. Christa is a Goddess-worshipper, and a number of her friends convert to this religion, which is portrayed as more empowering and liberating than Christianity.

Christa's friend and teacher of guitar, Kevin, has a gay brother, Danny, and his story is given close attention: over the course of the novel he is diagnosed with, and dies from, AIDS while the brothers desperately try to reconnect and overcome their difficult family history in the time they have remaining.

The realm of the Sidh is depicted as static and incapable of growth or change, just like the Sidh themselves, but mortal influence brings this state of affairs to an end, suggesting hope and renewal for the future: another common theme across Baudino's work.

### **Notes and related works**

There is some confusion over the title of *Dragonsword*, with it occasionally being written as *Dragon Sword*. This appears to be due to the word being broken into two parts on the novel's cover. The one-word title fits the text better, given that the Dragonsword is a literal object in the novel: it is used in the bibliographical information, and is also used more frequently in catalogues; therefore it has been used here.

## Beckett, Terri & Power, Chris

### Standalone novels

#### *Tribute Trail (1999)*

#### G B M

Kherin, a prince chosen by the Goddess of his people, is betrayed and sent as a slave to a distant tribe. Rythian, a hunter who comes to lead that tribe, frees him, and they ultimately become lovers while fighting against a mutual threat. The onset of their relationship is quite surprising to the reader, as the possibility is hardly even hinted at until Kherin goes to Rythian at a climactic moment. It is made clear by Kherin's Goddess that she intended them both for one another. The fact that Kherin is chosen by the Goddess, and Rythian (as his people's virile male leader) by the God is also emphasised: this gendering of their roles is shown both sexually and in Kherin having access to female/Goddess magic, which is considered unnatural. The primary obstacle to their relationship is not their gender, but that Rythian, as his tribe's leader, may not have a family or a sword-brother (a man with whom he is in a recognised relationship): he must set his wives aside after his ascension, and in fact they ask Kherin to become part of their household in his place.

The masculinity of both Kherin and Rythian is also made clear, perhaps excessively so: in addition to their both having (at different times) the same set of multiple wives, a young eunuch who attempts to seduce Rythian is rejected, with Rythian claiming that if he had a male relationship he would want an older man who was a warrior. Both characters can be read as bisexual, given their attraction to and relationships with women, but it could be argued that this is yet another way of declaring/performing their masculinity, both within the text and to the reader. Two (again highly masculine) male members of Rythian's tribe are shown to be in a loving albeit rough relationship as sword-brothers throughout the text, and Kherin and Rythian make the same pledge in the end with divine sanction. Rather beautifully, their (homo)sexual awakening with one another is portrayed as both of them having new vistas and new pleasures to explore. It is revealed that Kherin and Rythian have been lovers forever, throughout the cycle of reincarnation (with no suggestion they were previously a male/female couple). The use of the God/Goddess duality to sanction a

male/male union in this novel is highly unusual, directly contradicting the heterosexual binary upon which this paradigm is based: for this alone, *Tribute Trail* may be unique.

# Bishop, Michael

## Standalone novels

### *Unicorn Mountain (1988)*

#### G

Libby, a Colorado rancher who has been sighting unicorns on her property, takes in her ex-husband's cousin, Bo, who is dying from AIDS. She is unusually honest with herself about her latent homophobia and has a number of very direct discussions with Bo on the nature of homosexuality and its treatment by society. Bo's relationship with his illness is explored, as is his guilt for not supporting his lover when he was dying. Disowned by his family, Bo is realistically presented as alternately cheerfully sarcastic and desperately bitter, with an incisive camp edge. Despite being both gay and terminally ill, he is depicted as neither passive nor desexualised.

Despite its magical elements (unicorns, Native American ritual practice, and unquiet ghosts all make an appearance), *Unicorn Mountain* is fundamentally a novel about AIDS. The unicorns cross the boundary between the mundane and the fantastical, something that is heavily stressed in the text, and their relationship with the queer is very evident: they are falling ill and dying from a mysterious sickness with symptoms similar to AIDS. Bo feels a tension exists between the fantasy of sexuality and freedom (unicorns) and the reality of AIDS and death (condoms), and this is reconciled when he uses the unicorns' image for a condom marketing campaign in his final project before dying. The unicorns also play a psychopomp role, with one arriving in the hospital room where an AIDS patient is dying.

The novel's final revelation that the unicorns have strayed from the (literal, physical, traversable) world of the dead and were infected with AIDS' spiritual analogue is a prelude to a great change coming to the world. The barriers between life and death, and reality and fantasy, are on the cusp of being destroyed forever, and rather than the fantastical being kept hidden it is being revealed to the entire world. In this way, Bishop manages to perfectly synthesise the queer and the fantastical into a challenge to the reader's understanding of both.

## **Block, Francesca Lia**

### **Series – Dangerous Angels**

Set in an idealised version of 1980s and 1990s Los Angeles, this series follows best friends Weetzie and Dirk, the lovers they find, and the families they create together, as well as their children's experiences growing up. Written in an almost magical realist style, the novels blur easily into the fantastical, with character names such as My Secret Agent Lover Man and Duck Drake being commonplace. The focus is always on love and human connection: the 'dangerous angel' of the series title is love.

#### *Weetzie Bat (1989)*

**G M**

Weetzie and her best friend Dirk are in high school when he comes out to her as gay. When she finds a genie in a lamp, she wishes for them both to find lovers and to have a place to live together, and those things come to pass. Dirk and his lover Duck are California punk surfer-types and are almost incidentally gay. In order for Weetzie to have a baby (against her lover's wishes), she, Duck, and Drake sleep together and she gets pregnant: ultimately she and her lover reconcile and the two couples form a household together. The last section takes a sharp turn from magical realism to harsh reality. An old friend of Duck's is dying of AIDS, resulting in Duck having a breakdown and leaving Dirk temporarily. Reuniting, the characters wonder how love and death could coexist (in the form of AIDS), and acknowledge they are all afraid: a particularly dark tone for what is generally considered a children's book.

#### *Witch Baby (1991)*

**G M**

Weetzie's adopted daughter, Witch Baby, seeks out her birth mother and accompanies Dirk and Duck on a visit to Duck's family. This novel only qualifies as fantasy due to its

situation within a fantastical series, as the entire focus is on relationships and belonging, with no real fantasy elements (other than her birth mother being a ‘witch’, though it is impossible to tell how literal this description is). Witch Baby’s sense of personal disconnection is analogous to Duck’s distance from his family: she outs him with the best of intentions, and the fallout from this is explored in depth. In particular, Duck’s mother admits she feels rejected by the fact of her son not being attracted to women. The spectre of AIDS (always nameless in the text) raises its head again, with Duck’s mother being afraid for him, and he and Dirk feeling certain that a cure will be found very soon: an inadvertent element of bitter irony.

### ***Baby Be-Bop (1995)***

## **G R**

Set chronologically before *Weetzie Bat*, the first half of this book follows Dirk’s upbringing by his grandmother and his struggles with his sexuality. Very much a psychological novel, Dirk’s feelings of something being wrong with him and his always having known on some level he was gay are addressed. His almost-sexual bond with a male childhood friend ends in their estrangement after Dirk’s friend can’t accept his own sexuality. Dirk’s recurring dreams of fathers on a train prefigure both a male-oriented sexuality and an oncoming Holocaust, with the imagery growing progressively darker as he grows older. Suffering a near-death experience after an assault, he admits his sexuality to his father’s ghost who counsels and supports him. The second half of the novel follows Duck, Dirk’s eventual lover, when he moves to LA as a teenager (with the friend who dies of AIDS in *Weetzie Bat*) and goes through a self-destructive phase. Assaulted by a mysterious man whose comments hint at the coming of AIDS, he escapes.

Block’s narrative declares that it is not too late for either Dirk or Duck, and that they will recover from their suffering through finding one another, and will still be young. This, of course, draws the reader’s attention directly to those for whom it was too late, and those who were too old: gay youth dying by suicide or assault or AIDS, and gay people of previous generations. Explicitly declaring that the only path to restoration is through telling these stories, this novel is very much a gay polemic.



## **Standalone novels**

### ***I Was A Teenage Fairy (1998)***

#### **G**

Two teenagers who are sexual abuse survivors, Barbie and Griffin, are helped to overcome their trauma and confront their abuser through the intervention of a small fairy, Mab. Griffin is gay, closeted, and in love with his straight male best friend. In a common enough pattern, he is saved by the concern of both Mab and the people who care for him. Mab's literal reality is occasionally in question, as a deliberate effort to blur the boundaries of the real, but Block is very much working with fantasy. Griffin's status as a 'fairy' is also played upon to explore the correspondences between the queer and the fantastical.

#### **Notes and related works**

The third and fourth books of the 'Dangerous Angels' series were excluded due to their lack of primary LGBT characters: *Cherokee Bat and the Goat Guys* (1992) and *Missing Angel Juan* (1993). Block's later books in this series (after *Baby Be-Bop*) were published outside the time period of this research.

## **Brenchley, Chaz**

### **Series – Outremer**

In a fantasy version of the Crusaders' kingdom, Marron (a monastic novice) and Jemel (a desert tribesman), supported by many others, fall in love while uncovering extraplanar secrets and shifting the power balance of their world on both a metaphysical and a political level. Marron's mentor and former lover, the knight Sieur Anton, kills Jemel's first love, leading to conflicting loyalties and emotions for everyone involved.

### *Tower of the King's Daughter (1998)*

#### **G M**

Marron's homosexuality is made clear very early in the novel, as are the strong religious prohibitions against it: he and his first love, both novices, are tormented internally as a result. Both the titular tower and a foreign kingdom are entirely sealed off from outside influence or entry, and this metaphor is extended to Marron himself, who is a very passive character. Taken on as a squire by Sieur Anton, who is rumoured to prefer young men, the two of them transition to a sexual relationship very suddenly after a certain amount of dramatic tension. The sex between them is depicted very bluntly and openly, an unusual trend for a mainstream novel, and their emotional and sexual relationship has significant elements of power and dominance (with Sieur Anton in control), verging on BDSM if not crossing that line entirely. Jemel's relationship with *his* lover, Jazra, is very different from Marron's. The two of them are warriors from a warrior culture who fight together, consider themselves equals, and face no social stigma for their relationship.

When Marron finds himself bound to the King's Daughter, a magical power that possesses its wielder and 'marries' itself to him, he becomes both fundamentally different from everyone around him and set apart from them: among other things, animals cannot bear to be near him, he does not need to sleep, and his eyes change colour. These differences and the separation from those around him that result from them are inextricable from Marron's nature as a queer character: his feelings of difference and being set apart, and the ways in which he does in fact differ from those around him due to his sexuality, are

expressed through the very literal metaphor of the King's Daughter, setting him apart in very obvious physical ways.

*Feast of the King's Shadow (2000)*

**G M**

Despite, or perhaps because of, Marron's apartness and difference, Jemel becomes very attached to Marron and swears loyalty to him as a dervish, becoming an outcast from his tribe for doing so. It is interesting to note that although Marron regrets many things and hates himself for many things, such as betraying Sieur Anton, his sexuality is never among those things: however, a certain degree of residual shame from his upbringing is mentioned. A female friend falls in love with him also, but is dissuaded: when she discusses Marron and Jemel's possible relationship with a friend of hers, they comment that Marron is already 'betrothed' to Sieur Anton.

Despite this, Marron and Jemel do slowly become intimate. Marron's bond to the Daughter allows him to pass into the world of the djinni (another queer power: entering liminal spaces), where there are no living things, and he brings Jemel there when at risk of death. Their relationship is consummated in this otherworldly space, and they return to their own world as a couple. They also discuss their respective cultural attitudes to homosexuality: Jemel disapproves Marron of trivialising a relationship between two men as 'boys' games', while Marron points out that both men and boys have died for it.

**Notes and related works**

The final volume in Brenchley's 'Outremer' trilogy, *Hand of the King's Evil*, was published outside the time period of the research.

## **Chalker, Jack**

### **Series – Changewinds**

Two teenage girls from Earth, Sam and Charley, are brought through a magical Changewind to another plane of existence, where they are hunted due to Sam's unique magical ability to control the Changewinds. This series has a strong, and frankly exploitative, focus on gender and sexuality. An incomplete list of examples: Sam goes through being insecure in identifying as female, being magically mentally conditioned as masculine, raping a man, marrying a woman, and coming out as a lesbian; Charley is excessively feminine, magically manipulated to be more so, is later magically lobotomised to become a prostitute... Both characters are raped or magically compelled into sex more than once. The excessive focus on, and repetitive nature of, the characters' bodies, identities and sexualities being manipulated and controlled by magic brings the reader from discomfort on the characters' behalf to discomfort with the author. Not only does it seem to be presented with a consistent and heavy-handed erotic element, the incessant outside influence on the characters' identities leaves continual confusion as to their natures as individuals, impeding the continuity of the series as its characters are made unrecognisable. No physical, mental, or sexual element of either character remains the same from the series' beginning through to its end.

The Changewinds themselves, and those they touch, are interesting from a queer perspective. The winds are feared because they bring changes that cannot be resisted, including literal physical changes and immunity to magic; the victims of these transformations are always killed as they no longer fit in and cannot be magically compelled. Similarly, Sam's abilities to affect Changewinds are linked to her being set apart by her sexual orientation.

#### ***When the Changewinds Blow (1987)***

**L T F**

Sam and Charley are transported to a new world, mentally and physically altered and conditioned through magic, and set loose. Although they have sex at one point while on

Earth, this is clearly out of comfort and companionship on Charley's part, and this tension between them evaporates when Sam is (temporarily) mentally conditioned as male and as Charley's 'brother'.

Issues of consent are blithely ignored throughout the novel: Sam uses mental magic to change a man's sexual orientation and personality to that of a stereotypical camp gay man as a punishment for betrayal, and later enslaves an amoral female alchemist with a love potion (leading to their marriage). She is punished for her moral degeneration (although the rape is not considered part of this) by being made obese. The culture where Sam marries Boday the alchemist acknowledges same-sex relationships for legal purposes but officially disapproves of them; marriages in this world are both a legal and a magical bond. Later in the novel Sam uses mind control to rape a man: this is portrayed simply as her exploring her sexuality.

### *Riders of the Winds (1988)*

**L F**

At the beginning of the novel, with Sam and Charley on the run, Sam admits to herself she was never interested in men: later she struggles with integrating a lesbian identity. Taken in by a project that magically 'rehabilitates' outsiders, they overwrite Sam's personality and sexual orientation so she can fit into their society and be content: meanwhile Charley and Boday are enslaved and compelled. The author's fascination with sexual magical compulsion and bodily violation is again evident as Charley's body and her skin colour are reshaped and changed once more. Charley's role as a prostitute in this culture is examined: she finds it empowering and independent on a personal level to engage in sex work. The cultural intolerance of the different is also explored further, and it's explained to Sam that while the inherently different are one thing, the real fear people have is that one of their own might *become* different; the parallels with queerness and homosexuality are obvious.

### *War of the Maelstrom (1988)*

**L F**

Although it ends the series, this novel fails to resolve many of the uncomfortable issues

raised throughout. Sam's lesbianism and Charley's promiscuity are both revealed as the result of magic that imposed patterns on their sexualities, depriving them of even more agency. Sam struggles further with her lesbianism and her obesity, ultimately going through a magical trial where she has a deep dialogue with herself and comes to finally accept herself completely. To give the novel credit, the disputed nature of homosexuality as a mixture of genetics and environment is discussed, as is an interpretation of homosexuality as an extended form of the natural impulse for same-sex bonding. The social prejudice (both on Earth and in this realm) against homosexuality is debated and the primacy of an individual's happiness in that regard is upheld. In fact, this section is rather didactic and polemical, albeit positively so from an LGBT perspective.

Sam's rape of a man is cursorily revisited, but Sam simply admits she didn't enjoy the sex, that she hoped the man did, and she hopes her unexpected pregnancy is by him since he was killed later. This offhand treatment (and double standard) is jarring, and it does not help especially when Chalker reveals late in the novel that Sam's behaviour in that rape scene was magically compelled, unbeknownst to her, to force a pregnancy on her: the consistent lack of any agency for these characters is, if anything, more disturbing.

The ability of magic to change sexual orientation in this setting is of especial note: this is unusual in fantasy, where there is a convention that truly intrinsic aspects of self tend to be difficult or impossible to alter through magic. Although this is not the case in Chalker's setting, there are some caveats. It's made clear all three times Sam's sexual orientation is altered that there was an element of her with which it aligned: when her lesbianism was initially codified through magic, she already had an inclination that way; both times she was (temporarily) rewritten with a straight orientation, it drew on her desire to be 'normal' and happy. A character notes that despite a magical 'cure' for homosexuality being common in this setting, very few avail of it. One interpretation is that rather than changing sexuality as an aspect of self, such magic simply changes a person's romantic and sexual object-choice and makes them happy with the change. It is made clear that Sam's ability to control the Changewinds (and the ability of all Storm Princesses) is directly linked to and dependent on her lesbianism, with her queerness setting her apart the necessary distance to be a wielder of power. In fact, when she is temporarily made 'straight' by magic, her abilities stop working; this, however, suggests sexual-orientation-changing magic may affect the self on a deeper level.

Sam's ultimate apotheosis as Goddess reveals a fundamental male/female duality at the heart of the setting: the Storm Princesses could call power but not control it, and the

powerful (mostly male) wizards were the reverse. The lesbianism of all Storm Princesses is explained as an inbuilt safeguard to prevent their ascension by finding their male Platonic other half. Although this rather sidelines non-binary and queer understandings of the world, it also upholds an understanding of queerness and magic as rooted in an unresolved tension.

As a final note, Charley's resolution is insulting and unbelievable: after she is gang-raped, she realises prostitution is seamy rather than empowering, and – despite her previous enjoyment of sex work and promiscuity, and her support of sexual freedom – she enters a monogamous relationship and has multiple children with an overweight, balding, nerdish wizard who turns out to be amazing in bed. Whether this is a wish-fulfilment of the author's or a pandering to the (perhaps implicitly male, straight, and virginal) reader, it feels forced and deeply false to the character, inasmuch as she retains any coherent identity.

**Series – Far Kingdoms**

A quartet of books following members of a prominent family in the city-state of Orissa, and the various fantastical travels they have around their world. The novels alternate between following a merchant venturer and explorer named Amalric and following the adventures of his lesbian warrior sister Rali.

*The Warrior's Tale (1994)*

**L F**

Rali, an experienced lesbian soldier, and the all-female Maranon Guard of warriors she captains are sent on an Oddysey-esque quest by sea around the world, chasing an enemy of their city. The Maranon Guard, who forswear men, are primarily lesbian, and Rali's lesbianism and her bluntness about it is central to both her character and the narrative: the device of her story being set down by a (frequently shocked) male scribe is used to good effect to highlight the silencing of women's voices and lesbian voices in particular. The frequent sexual content and lavish descriptions of female attractiveness read as a rough and authentic voice rather than exploitative, and Rali's character is always that of a soldier first and a lover of women second: she is deeply insulted when it is suggested that the Maranon Guard's lesbianism is related to their prowess as a fighting unit. There is a great deal of discussion of same-sex relationships, their place in society, and the treatment of women in general. Rali's history with men who seek to turn her straight through sex, as well as her family (other than Amalric) disapproving of her is also touched on. At one point, in a rather sad scene, she realises her enemy has trapped her in a magical fantasy of happiness due to the fact that her family now accept her sexual orientation: Rali knows this is impossible.

*The Warrior Returns (1996)*

**L F**



Rali, who has been in a magical sleep for fifty years along with the love of her life, is called back to the world by her goddess in order to save her city of Orissa. Dispensing with the device of the scribe, Rali herself warns away any reader who would disapprove of her lesbianism: this clearly is, and is intended to be, a novel of a lesbian. Recounting in turn how Rali ended up in an enchanted sleep, and then how she saves Orissa once more (from a female villain created and warped by male lust), this is, like *The Warrior's Tale*, a rollicking lesbian warrior romp with an emphasis on adventure rather than plot. It primarily stands out due to it being unusual for this form of picaresque adventure to centre on a female character.

### **Notes and related works**

Although the 'Far Kingdoms' series was begun and primarily written by Cole and Bunch together, the last novel (*The Warrior Returns*) was written solely by Cole. The first and third novels of the series (*The Far Kingdoms*) and (*Kingdoms of the Night*) were excluded due to their lack of primary LGBT characters.

## Constantine, Storm

### Series - Grigori

This trilogy explores a supernatural society and culture hidden on contemporary Earth: the Grigori are a reclusive race of beautiful and mostly amoral immortals, but when their Satanic/messianic figure Shemyaza returns and becomes involved with mortals the spiritual landscape of the world begins a great change. Drenched in sometimes oppressive occult symbolism and a New Age aesthetic, these books are confusing and hard to classify, and the actual impact the characters have on what is happening is difficult to assess: the abandonment of various characters from book to book does not help.

#### *Stalking Tender Prey (1995)*

**G B M R**

Lily and Owen, an incestuous pair of twins, and Owen's romantic interest Daniel, live in a small village in the UK that is disrupted when a stranger comes to town. From the beginning the tone is dark and sexual, with Lily and Owen's strange relationship being made clear and Owen performing sex rites in the forest with Daniel and other men. Owen and Daniel's relationship is portrayed sensitively: although Owen is older Daniel is clearly not being exploited. They have various misunderstandings around the nature of Daniel's (gay) sexuality and their feelings for one another. Although mostly positive, these characters are also stereotypical: Daniel is sexually passive and described as female-like in various ways, while the stranger (a dark aspect of Shemyaza, who seduces both men and women) accuses Owen of being afraid of women despite his apparent bisexuality. Owen is magically compelled to rape Daniel, which damages Owen tremendously, and it is revealed that Daniel is the reincarnation of Shemyaza's oracle and lover.

#### *Scenting Hallowed Blood (1996)*

**G B M**

Pursuing his bond to the now-restored Shemyaza, Daniel follows him to a Grigori enclave in Cornwall where a local coven of human witches attempt to gain control of Shemyaza's power. It is revealed that Daniel's past incarnation was a Grigori, and he becomes a more active and fully realised character throughout the text. By the end of the novel, it becomes clear that his relationship with Owen has run its course and he establishes a relationship with the bisexual Shemyaza (or perhaps reestablishes, given their relationship in previous incarnations).

There is an interlude where Daniel sleeps with another Grigori: Shemyaza, accustomed to a dominant power dynamic with Daniel and with no understanding of human psychology, tells Daniel he has polluted himself and cannot sleep with Shemyaza until he abstains for three days. Instead, Daniel (advised by the goddess Ishtar, Shemyaza's historical female lover) reclaims his independence and asserts his manhood/masculinity by taking the active role in sex (again, not with Shemyaza). The sharp delineation of various sex roles as 'male' and 'female' is not uncommon, but unexpected in a self-consciously sexually progressive work and perhaps betrays a more rigid paradigm on the author's part than might be expected: Daniel, having taken this role, declares that he is a man now and that it is vile. In contrast, when the witches realise Daniel (an adult gay male) has the powers of prophecy they always ascribed only to women and pubescent boys, one of them admits that her ideas of God/Goddess and male/female sexual and spiritual polarity and dualism may be outdated, and that the new age may be bringing new ways. This suggests a certain conflict within the text, and perhaps in the author's attitude to the topic.

### *Stealing Sacred Fire (1997)*

## G M

Five years have passed since *Scenting Hallowed Blood*, with Shemyaza in a coma from awakening the power of the land. When he awakes he summons Daniel and his other followers, who have grown disillusioned and disheartened waiting for him. The changes between Daniel and Shemyaza are explored in detail: Daniel has grown older and become more independent, and their relationship has been damaged by the time apart. Also, Shemyaza, being a deity, is often accidentally cruel, arrogant, domineering, and selfish. Travelling around the world together, they feel estranged until Daniel undergoes an initiatory vision and is physically transformed into a Grigori: this rebirth provides the spark

to rekindle their relationship.

When Shemyaza is sacrificed and reborn, the series ends with a great potential for change coming to the world and with the various characters reaffirming their care for one another. The goddess Ishtar is reborn and will be Shemyaza's bride in time. This is intriguing, as the focus throughout has been on Daniel and Shemyaza's relationship (historically he loved both of them). Despite the discussion in *Scenting Hallowed Blood* of male/female dualism no longer being necessary, this suggests Constantine's world must incorporate it in an ending. It is unclear whether Daniel's love is being sidelined by the narrative, or given its own space in which to be performed: Daniel and Ishtar are no longer rivals as they were in the past, and Daniel and Shemyaza have a more equal relationship this time, but the necessity of including a heterosexual relationship for Shemyaza at all seems questionable. Clearly none of these relationships are exclusive of one another: however, the overt New Age occult symbolism that required Ishtar's relationship with Shemyaza appears to have nearly displaced the queer relationship and its importance to the text. A more positive reading would suggest Daniel and Ishtar's relationships with Shemyaza will now have equal importance, both symbolically and for Shemyaza as an individual.

### **Series – Chronicles of Magravandias**

In a fantasy world dominated by a fire-worshipping Empire that has gained dominion over all rival elemental powers, the stories of various characters intersect as a power arises that attempts to overthrow the Empire.

#### ***The Crown of Silence (2000)***

#### **G B M**

Khaster, a minor character who disappeared in the series' first novel, *Sea Dragon Heir*, is central to this book, half of which retells his background. A married and avowedly heterosexual army officer in the service of the Empire, he fell in love with a young mystic and prince's kept man, Tayven, who was later supposedly executed for treason. Their courtship is recounted in detail. Khaster's rejection of homosexuality stems from its being associated with the Empire's decadence (being from a vassal state himself), a device which

allows the character to be homophobic in an entirely fantastic context. He is also deeply concerned by Tayven's age (sixteen, though the prince first pursued him at thirteen; Khaster is twenty-five): this has wider currency due to the prevalence of this younger/older dynamic in gay literature and culture. Tayven argues passionately to be permitted to make his own choices, and he and Khaster sleep together on the eve of his seventeenth birthday: Khaster very deliberately does not wait until after midnight, Tayven having pointed out the artificiality of such sociocultural distinctions.

In the later half of the book, Khaster (now an embittered mystic named Taropat) and Tayven are reunited through Taropat's apprentice Shan, having both believed one another dead: their efforts to reconcile are abortive, especially due to their political opposition. Constantine's rather rigid attitudes on gendered sex roles recur: when Tayven, as a spy, may be required to sleep with a queen his friends wonder if he is capable, but conclude that regardless of his preferences he is 'still a man'. That being said, there is a certain self-awareness evident when Tayven accuses Khaster of a constant need for control, holding up as evidence the fact that Khaster would never let Tayven take the active role in sex. Whether this subverts the 'older man/passive boy' dynamic or simply reinforces gendered ideas of maleness and sex is open to interpretation. The 'queer mystic' archetype is very evident, with both Khaster/Taropat and Tayven filling that role at various points of their lives.

### **Notes and related works**

The first book in the 'Chronicles of Magravandias' series, *Sea Dragon Heir* (1998) was excluded due to its lack of primary LGBT characters. The third book lies outside the time period of the research.

Constantine's *Wraeththu* series was ultimately excluded from this research due to its being considered more a science fiction series than a fantasy one.

## Cooke, Catherine

### Series – Winged Assassin

Arris, born to a tribe who worship an ancient dark goddess, is marked from birth to be his goddess's lover (and thus a sacrifice to her), but he rejects his destiny and leaves his people. He is alternately a slave, lover, and assassin, and defies multiple gods in order to protect his love Saresha, a prince of another culture with whom he was raised as a fosterling. Arris's supposed bisexuality, however, is a little tenuous. Portrayed as equally attracted to men and women in *The Winged Assassin*, he claims to be more attracted to men in *The Crimson Goddess*, and when he considers settling down and abandoning his dream of Saresha his fantasy is of spending his life with another man; all his romantic relationships are also with men. Although none of this is inconsistent with a bisexual orientation, given the time at which the series was written it may also be that an ostensibly bisexual character was considered more acceptable (or less alienating to the reader) than an exclusively gay one.

### *The Winged Assassin (1987)*

#### G B M

Arris, considered tainted and suspicious due to his innate magical gifts, is cast out by Saresha's people and taken back by his own tribe, who he later leaves due to his embrace of dark magic. He becomes a slave to a bisexual foreign emperor and is used for sex: their relationship, while never equal, is complex, and he saves the emperor from an assassin at one point, leading to his own training as an assassin. When sent to kill Saresha, however, he is unable to do so due to having fallen in love with him. Saresha's culture (unlike the emperor's) is explicitly homophobic, and Arris uses this to his advantage at one point, playing up his bisexuality in order to be ostracised by those who might see through his disguise. Arris's 'taintedness' due to his gifts and dark magic, his status as an outcast, and his use of his gifts to block his emotions all contribute to the queerness of the narrative.

A point worth noting is Arris's age throughout, and the sexualisation within the text (and possibly of Arris himself). Arris's stunning beauty is frequently remarked upon, and

he himself pays close (and descriptive) attention to the physical appearance of those he finds attractive. Early in the text a man ogles Arris and wishes he were a slave: this would be uncomfortable in any situation, but Arris is nine years old at the time. This is not an isolated instance of ‘villainous paedophilia’ (a not uncommon fantasy trope): when Arris is raped and enslaved by the emperor he is thirteen, and he is the emperor’s favourite lover by sixteen. Although the text never glamourises rape or the sexualisation of children, Arris’s first (fully consensual) experience with a girl in his tribe was when they were both thirteen and this is considered usual within the tribe’s culture.

*Realm of the Gods (1988)*

**G B M**

Arris admits his love for Saresha to himself while returning to report to the emperor. On the journey he has a brief romance with a male lieutenant in the emperor’s army (Arris rejects monogamy as a concept), but when the deeply infatuated lieutenant finds out Arris is a former slave he feels dishonoured, attempts to rape him, and their relationship shatters. Arris reflects earlier that a man of the empire, even if not interested in men, would not be offended by being approached: this makes it clear that this culture is open to homosexuality while not assuming an omnipresent bisexuality.

When Saresha, who like Arris is divinely touched, calls on his gods to help in an emergency, he and Arris (previously captured and slated for execution) are translated to the extraplanar divine realm. While unable to leave, and refused divine assistance in doing so, they are reconciled as friends and resolve to escape together.

*The Crimson Goddess (1989)*

**G B M**

Travelling the landscape of the divine realm, Arris and Saresha discuss Arris’s attraction to men. Saresha has been taught that homosexual feelings are an adolescent phase, but Arris rejects this view. The religious sinfulness of homosexuality is also discussed but Saresha (obliviously heterosexual) claims Arris’s nature doesn’t matter to him. Later, when they are both imprisoned and about to die, Saresha asks Arris for ‘comfort’ that is physical and at

least a little sexual: this is clearly situational and Saresha doesn't speak of it afterwards, although it doesn't appear to damage their relationship.

It is revealed that Arris was born to be his goddess's perfect lover: however, to sabotage this, Saresha's gods ordained that he be born nine months later to be *Arris's* perfect lover. When the goddess is freed, Arris and Saresha's peoples fight together against the emperor's invading army and the goddess's avatar whispers in Saresha's ear: afterwards, Saresha tells Arris she helped him realise his feelings for Arris, giving them both a gift. They both resolve to share their lives and be together (although Saresha will need to sire children).

The resolution of Saresha's and Arris's relationship is strange, because it is fundamentally inconsistent with Saresha's character as represented in the trilogy, and its context is curious. The goddess's high priestess has a gift to see to the heart of things and uncover the truth, but Arris points out to her that mysteries work differently: wisdom is gained from walking the maze, not cutting through the hedges. The literal *deus ex machina* resolution of the obstacle of Saresha's sexuality works similarly: there is an unwriting and rewriting of Saresha that takes place in order to grant both characters a happy ending. This does not necessarily invalidate the narrative, but it makes it very distinct from one where two sexually compatible characters realise their feelings for one another in a 'normal' way.



## Dorsey, Candas Jane

### Standalone novels

#### *Black Wine (1997)*

L B F R

A feminist fantasy told through intercut flashbacks that span generations, this is a dense and complicated text. Ea flees political trouble with her lover and half-sister Annalies, eventually settling down long enough to raise her daughter Essa; Essa closes the circle by seeking out her vanished mother. Cycles and patterns recur throughout: Ea and Essa meet when both have adopted new identities due to injury and madness, and do not recognise one another. The ideas of female connectedness and women's secrets are important to the text: a recurrent theme is the persecution and marginalisation of women who don't fit in. Both Ea and Essa are bisexual in their affections, and at one point Essa enters a group marriage with a man and a woman. The final scene, where a mysterious old woman midwives Essa's passage through a forest and into the heart of the world, suggests she is entering the heart and power of myth and creating a space there for herself and, by extension, for women.

## **Dreher, Sarah**

### **Series – Stoner McTavish**

This series, fundamentally a detective/mystery series, incorporates science fiction, fantasy, and New Age spiritual elements at various points as it follows the cases of the lesbian amateur detective Stoner McTavish, her eccentric psychic Aunt Hermione, and Stoner's girlfriend Gwen.

#### ***Gray Magic (1987)***

#### **L F**

This novel follows Stoner and Gwen as they encounter and defeat a shape-changing skinwalker while on vacation near a Navajo reservation. An early scene shows Gwen's abortive attempt to come out as a lesbian to her homophobic grandmother, leading to Stoner making an angry speech about the lack of lesbian representation and how lesbians do the dirty and necessary work in the world. Gwen's deep upset and feeling of rejection persists throughout the novel.

A connection is made between the oppressive history of the Native Americans and of lesbians, and a history of inclusion of lesbians and women warriors in Navajo / Diné society is briefly mentioned. Dreher's series deals more with New Age spirituality than fantasy, but *Gray Magic*, at least, includes fantasy directly, with Stoner and a female Indian shaman performing various magics to oppose the skinwalker. Interestingly, Stoner's lesbianism is crucial to defeating the villain, as he draws his power from consuming women's spirits but hers cannot be touched by a man.

### **Notes and related works**

The other books of the Stoner McTavish series either lay outside the time period of the research or were not considered to be fantasy novels.

## **Duane, Diane**

### **Series – Tale of the Five**

The world of this series has a creator Goddess who manifests directly in her worshippers' lives, with everyone meeting her personally at least once. Duane's series follows a large number of characters who all become the Goddess's chosen weapons against the Shadow (representing the flaws in the world). Duane's setting differs from the standard fantasy mode in a number of ways. Although monarchy and nobility exist, they seem to do so within a paradigm of ritual sacrifice: if a lord's land becomes infertile he can be killed and his ashes ploughed into the soil. The magical power of the setting, the Fire (of creation), is restricted solely to women, and one focus of the series is Herewiss attempting to become the first man in millennia to wield the Fire, which he achieves through the support of his male lover.

Finally, Duane's world appears to be one where sexual identity/orientation does not exist as a concept: all her characters are effectively bisexual and polyamorous / group marriages are common, and the terms 'sharing' and 'loved' are used for sex and lover/partner/husband/wife respectively. This may be related to the fact that all characters, regardless of gender, relate to the Goddess's Lover aspect as an object of desire. What is interesting, however, is that this suggests that the usual sexual orientation labels do not apply, as in a world of undifferentiated sexuality the concepts of homosexual/heterosexual/bisexual would have no meaning. This series also predates a great deal of the established LGBT literature in the genre: in fact, it could be said that, as sexual orientation has no impact on the characters' identity, this series is of gay and lesbian interest without actually representing gay/lesbian/bisexual characters, as such.

### ***The Door into Sunset (1993)***

**G B M R**

The main relationship driving this novel is that between Herewiss, the sorcerer, and Freelorn, his lover, who is an exiled prince. They are long-established lovers in this novel,

and have a strong, tender, and complicated relationship, which is explored in depth: there is a great deal of unpacking their feelings for one another and examining the changes in their relationship throughout the novel. Herewiss has a sexless and genderless elemental, Sunspark, as a familiar, and they are also lovers: Sunspark manifests alternately as a man and as a woman but tends to use male pronouns, and their relationship is very much one of power and control with slight overtones of BDSM. The novel ends with the 'everyone gets married' format, although adds the unusual twist of all the characters entering a seven-way group marriage.

### **Notes and related works**

The other books of this series, *The Door into Fire* and *The Door into Shadow*, lie outside the time period of the research.

Duane planned a final book for 2002, *The Door into Starlight*, but it remains unwritten and unpublished as of 2015.<sup>7</sup>

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<sup>7</sup> Online post from Diane Duane in 2011: 'Let me assure everybody that it is my intention to write *The Door into Starlight* before I die. Mostly for the good and sufficient reason that *I said I would*.' Duane, however, goes on to discuss the fact that the series did not sell well and that she may have to resort to self-publishing it. Retrieved from <http://dianeduane.com/outofambit/2011/07/15/since-you-were-asking-the-door-into-starlight/> on 1 February 2016.

## Duffy, Stella

### Standalone novels

#### *Singling out the Couples (1998)*

#### L G B F M

Cushla, a dark fairytale princess born without compassion, seeks to break up and destroy three couples through seduction. One of these couples is a pair of gay men, a cliché of gay yuppie liberal domestic bliss, which she shatters by seducing one of them as a female version of himself: the impact this has on both his relationship and his own concept of his sexual orientation is discussed in depth, as being gay is very central to this character's identity. He eventually convinces himself that although his gay orientation is integral to his self, he simply found her attractive regardless; the narrative notes that a dominant cultural narrative of straightness made it easier for him to perform that role despite his homosexuality. Cushla later seduces a straight/bisexual woman, again through physicality by appealing to her aesthetic of the perfect body. The depiction of lesbian sex departs from the default of hazy romance to be rough and raw: common for gay male sex in the genre but very rare for lesbians.

Duffy gleefully avoids happy endings, first providing false ones for each couple and then shattering them and presenting the truth of things. In particular she goes out of her way to avoid a happy ending for the gay couple, who reconcile but unexpectedly must raise a daughter one of them fathered: she then grows up a fundamentalist Christian and renounces them. Duffy is aware of the need and desire for queer happy endings, and deliberately writes counter to that trend.

## Feintuch, David

### Series – Rodrigo of Caledon

In Feintuch's fantasy world, all domains and kingdoms have an associated unique magical ability borne by those who rule that domain. The kingdom of Caledon has the power of the Still, which is shrouded in mystery and can only be wielded by a virgin. The definition of 'virgin' in this setting is an intriguing one, as it does not apply to homosexual contact (or masturbation, for that matter) but applies to any heterosexual sexual contact whatsoever. No reason for this restriction is ever given: it is simply a fact the characters must accept. The additional requirement is that the wielder of the Still be True: this is likewise ill-defined, but at the very minimum requires not being forsworn and an effort to be honest with oneself. Despite the implication that heterosexual sex is more meaningful, Caledon appears to have no real prejudice against homosexuality, although there is a presumption that marriages and permanent relationships will be straight ones and some implied teasing that a man with a male lover might have been unable to attract a woman.

#### *The Still (1997)*

#### **G B M R**

Rodrigo, prince of Caledon, must flee the castle after his mother's death and attempt to claim the throne from a usurper with the help of his childhood friend Rustin and a number of other characters. Rodrigo's psychology is interesting, and has two distinct elements: his utterly spoiled and petulant nature, and his incredible sexual frustration due to the requirements of the Still. For the vast majority of the novel he has no redeeming characteristics, and barely manages to acquire a few through the bisexual Rustin's charmingly direct intervention: Rodrigo ends up begging Rustin to teach him to be a man, leading to Rustin using physical discipline on Rodrigo in a strange BDSM-esque relationship. In fact, it *is* a BDSM discipline relationship: Rustin is dominant over Rodrigo, the prince having vowed to obey him as his mentor and accept his discipline, and Rustin uses his authority where necessary to give Rodrigo orders.

When they become lovers, or at least sex partners, this power relation does not

change despite the additional complications. Rodrigo is straight but desperate for a sexual release due to the demands of the Still; the bisexual Rustin, however, is in love with Rodrigo, and takes what connection he can get, which makes his story rather a sad one. Rustin loves Rodrigo not only romantically but also as a vassal and as a brother; Rodrigo, however, does not properly value him, feeling ashamed of their relationship and its necessity. By the end of the novel he learns to accept Rustin's love: although he still plans to marry and is primarily attracted to women, he will maintain his relationship with Rustin until then.

Rodrigo's uncle has a 'valet' and it is clear they are in a relationship: there is some subtle byplay of which Rodrigo is unaware, but it is clear Rustin sleeps with the valet to gain political support for Rodrigo, which he finds degrading both in general and due to the man's darker sexual interests.

In this novel power is de facto connected with homosexuality: power is maintained by the avoidance of heterosexual sex, which leads to increased situational homosexuality; through the power relation of such a relationship, Rodrigo is made into a worthy vessel for power.

### **Notes and related works**

Feintuch's sequel to *The Still*, *The King* (2002), lay outside the time period of the research.

## **Fletcher, Jane**

### **Standalone novels**

#### **The World Celaeno Chose (1999)**

**L      F**

Walking a fine line between fantasy and science fiction, Fletcher portrays a world based on science fiction but presented in a fantasy milieu. In an all-female world, imprinters such as Lynn have the ability to manipulate DNA, allowing pregnancies to occur: for religious reasons, they are cloistered and required to remain virgins. Lynn's romance with Kim, a ranger lieutenant, is therefore appropriately forbidden and secret, in a world where a female-female relationship would otherwise be not only unexceptional but without any alternative. In fact, there is some question as to whether the term 'lesbian' has any meaning in an all-female world, as there would be no way of expressing any non-female-oriented sexual orientation. Fletcher's characters discuss and deconstruct relationships and the ideas of romantic love in passing, and their sexuality is unselfconsciously depicted.

### **Notes and related works**

*The World Celaeno Chose* was republished by Bold Strokes Books in 2005 under the title *The Temple at Landfall*.



## **Flewelling, Lynn**

### **Series – Nightrunner**

Seregil, a gentleman thief and agent, takes the young ingénue Alec as his apprentice. Over the course of the series, they become friends and lovers while having various adventures: the phrase ‘father, brother, friend, and lover’ is used repeatedly to describe Seregil’s relationship to Alec, who progressively becomes more Seregil’s equal. Seregil is elven (faie), and it is revealed later in the series that Alex is unknowingly faie also: this revelation is remarkably similar to a coming-out experience. The faie word *talímenios* is used to describe the relationship between them, which refers to both a relationship status and a literal magical bond they share as a couple.

### ***Luck in the Shadows (1996)***

#### **G B**

Seregil and Alex meet for the first time, and the sexual tension between them is immediately evident: descriptive gaze is used to great effect to convey Seregil’s attraction to Alec. Alec, raised in a druidic religion that disapproves of homosexuality and is known for a strong level of modesty, is alternately embarrassed and oblivious. Their relationship in this novel never goes past subtext, but the potential for its further development is obvious, as is Seregil’s bisexuality. The variety of sexual expression in the society they live in, and its acceptance, is also made clear: the four gods have a sacred duality as male and female, and brothels cater to all combinations of male/female interest.

### ***Stalking Darkness (1997)***

#### **G B M**

Alec and Seregil’s relationship continues to develop: Seregil begins to use affectionate terms for him without realising, and Alec finds a love poem Seregil has written. Seregil, however, feels Alec is unlikely to reciprocate his interest, and this is true until Alec goes

through a quiet sexual awakening, realising Seregil's attractiveness and his own feelings for him. It is in this novel that Alec's faie nature is realised simultaneously with his feelings for Seregil, making the gay parallels obvious. Alec regrets not confessing his feelings when he is captured by villains: once rescued, they kiss impulsively. When Seregil attempts to ride off into the sunset, Alec takes a more active role in defining their relationship by chasing him down instead and forcing him to deal with their mutual love.

Seregil's interest in women is described as marginal, though he is technically bisexual, but Alec appears more strongly attracted to women, making an exception for Seregil. Alec is repeatedly violated in different ways: he is magically raped by a sorceress, and later eroticised and threatened with castration when captured. In many ways, therefore, he takes the stereotyped (and feminised) role of the damsel in distress.

### *Traitor's Moon (1999)*

## **G B M**

Moving on from the duology of the previous two books, this novel returns to Alec and Seregil some time later, when they are recruited for a political mission to Seregil's homeland. Seregil's status as an exile complicates matters, although his family accept Alec as his partner unquestioningly. The relationship between Alec and Seregil is also shown to have deepened and matured significantly, with Alec being more aggressive sexually confident and the text addressing the sexual as well as the romantic nature of their relationship more directly: it is interesting to note, however, that this transition from a very early relationship to a fully matured one has happened almost entirely offstage.

The age difference between Alec and Seregil is discussed: Alec is eighteen and Seregil is sixty. As both are faie and long-lived, this is only considered shocking due to Alec's youth rather than their age difference: Alec learns that a faie wouldn't be considered of age at eighteen, but that as a half-human he grew to adulthood faster. Another source of tension arises when Alec learns through prophecy that he will not father a child: Seregil worries Alec will regret his choices (in particular, his choice to be with Seregil).

Strangely, despite Flewelling's novel being in no way coy about Alec and Seregil's relationship, the word consistently used to link them (other than when they use the word *talímenios*) is 'friend', which seems somewhat reductive. It may be used to privilege their friendship above all else, but given the trends of reduction and concealment in this

literature it seems a questionable choice.

### **Notes and related works**

The later novels of the ‘Nightrunner’ series fall outside the research time period. Flewelling’s later ‘Tamir Triad’, beginning with *The Bone Doll’s Twin* (2001), is set in the same world as the ‘Nightrunner’ series and deals with transgender issues.

## **Fox, Astrid**

### **Standalone novels**

#### *Rika's Jewel (1999)*

**L F**

A light erotic novel in the 'lesbian warrior romp' mode. Rika, a girl in the Viking era, runs away from her village to join a female company of warriors, but is betrayed and almost sacrificed in a religious rite. Unsurprisingly for a book labelled as an erotic novel, there is a great deal of sex which is described in lurid detail. Rika's unhealthy relationship with her manipulative ex-lover Ingrid, and her desire for her father's acceptance are both explored in depth. The Viking concept of passive male homosexuality being the greatest possible shame is briefly mentioned, and the sexuality of pagan religions is favourably compared to Christianity.

## **Fox, Brandon**

### **Series – Pledged to Magic**

This erotic/pornographic series of novels set in a fantasy world follows a community of men (and women, though this is not focused on) who have discovered a new form of magic based on sensual and erotic same-sex contact, and their struggles against the ruling authority that seeks to control or destroy this power, which comes with immortality.

The fantasies this series deals with are traditional ones, reinterpreted to be very much associated with gay culture: eternal youth and beauty; a life of eroticism and willing lovers; unique and special magical power; a persecuting authority to struggle and define oneself against. It would be easy to dismiss this series as simply pornography and wish fulfilment – and it is pornography and wish fulfilment – but that would be to overlook the nature of the wishes that are being expressed and their queer relevance. The power that Fox's characters have is inextricable from their sexual nature, and in particular from their queerness: in this way they are perfect exemplars of the queer potential to effect change and disruption while also evoking desire. The simplicity of this series on one level as gay wish fulfilment is also its strength, as it reveals a great deal about what these wishes might be and what they accomplish for the reader and for the genre.

### *Apprenticed to Pleasure (1997)*

#### **G M**

Ander, a young musician, is recruited by a secretive cult of magicians and learns sex magic. The very practical principles of avoiding pain and prioritising one's partner's pleasure are central to this magical art. It is consistently described as being about sensuality and tension, not release: sexual self-restraint is a necessity for these mages, implying the queer nature of desire is integral to their sorcery. The narrative itself is very well-told and evokes a well-realised world and characters: this is not simply an excuse to string sex scenes together. Although sex in this novel is both ritualistic and described in detail, the characters form strong emotional bonds to one another and there are many intimate scenes that are non-sexual. In fact, despite it being an erotic novel, it has some of

the best portrayals of nonsexual gay intimacies in the genre. Similarly, while sexual openness is the norm for the characters – understandably, given the nature of their magic – a number of characters (including Ander) pair up in loving relationships.

The enemy's form of magic is powered by death, suggesting that their (oppositional) sex magic is the magic of life: hence the primary characters' sexual immortality. Also, although the series focuses on the male magicians, the female ones are acknowledged, and it is understood that there are men's and women's mysteries in this magic: this seems to admit the focus on one gender without erasing the other entirely.

### *Conjuring the Flesh (1998)*

#### **G M**

Ander and his mentor Thane are established as a couple, with a magical and emotional bond between them, and work with their friends and allies to organise a resistance against the local ruler. Thane emphasises the importance of love to their magic, so much so that it reads a little like an *apologia* of the author's. A major plot element is Thane's being struck with a curse and temporarily losing the ability to feel his emotional and magical bonds to other people (also depriving him of his magic). A drawback of the sorcerers' sexual immortality also becomes evident: both physical and emotional development is stunted when one doesn't age. Thane, therefore, despite being a powerful sorcerer, is mentally and emotionally nineteen and always will be: whether this can be read as a comment on certain stereotypes of gay culture is an open question. The backgrounds of a number of minor characters are explored, and it is revealed that two of the men were cast out of their community when revealed as lovers.

### *Sex Rites (2000)*

#### **G M**

Thane and Ander travel to a new land to escape the manhunt for Thane, and discover sacred places that hold magical secrets. A new character, Dannel, is a dervish-type martial artist whose abilities are enhanced through magically-enforced sexual frustration: again, the idea of desire rather than sex being the force powering magic is made very clear. Ander

and Thane's initiation of Dannel (both sexual and otherwise) is gentle, with a number of nonsexual scenes such as helping him learn to be touched by other people: a well-written change of pace from eroticism, and reinforcing their teaching that feelings are more important than sex for magic.

The novel (and by extension the series) takes a brief and entirely unnecessary detour into science fiction near the end, where the last of an ancient race judges the characters and returns them home, and it is revealed that the setting is Earth a million years in the future after an apocalypse. This strange attempted genre shift on the author's part in no way detracts from this series' position as a fantasy, albeit a fantasy that takes place after a science-fictional history.

## Galford, Ellen

### Standalone novels

#### *The Dyke and the Dybbuk (1993)*

#### L F

A modern non-observant Jewish lesbian, Rainbow, is haunted by a Jewish demon: Kokos, the titular dybbuk. Kokos, represented as female, is also lesbian. Through the dybbuk's manipulation Rainbow falls for a young woman of an extremely strict and separatist Jewish sect: this tension between queer identity and Jewish identity persists throughout the text.

After Rainbow learns the object of her interest, Riva, is married with six children, they become friends instead. In a climactic and affecting scene, Rainbow explains the concept of a 'dyke' to her. Portrayed as an argument between the spirits of the dead, Galford pits the priests and writers of the books of laws against the silenced and voiceless outcasts of Jewish society, who are at last finally heard.

Another lesbian character, Anya, who cursed Rainbow's family line with the dybbuk centuries ago, has survived to the modern day. She and Rainbow become lovers, while Riva banishes the dybbuk. Anya, through her dabbling with demons, ended up located slightly outside the world, unable to fully participate in it or to age: this exclusion and alienation is explicitly associated with her lesbianism and is resolved through her bond to Rainbow. This suggests the alienation was not inherent to her sexuality but rather due to her rejection by society and her inability to form connections with others.



## Goldstein, Lisa

### Standalone novels

#### *Strange Devices of the Sun and Moon (1993)*

G M

In an Elizabethan London where the Fairy Queen's court is secretly in exile, Alice, a bookseller's widow, investigates her son's disappearance and whether he was a fairy changeling. The queer elements come primarily from a secondary plot thread featuring Christopher Marlowe and his relationship with a younger man, ended prematurely by Marlowe's death. Primarily a novel about motherhood and children, this falls squarely within the emergent tradition of writing female spaces in fantasy. As a side note, Marlowe's lover's disapproving father remarking how the unbelievers brought the plague upon themselves seems too on point to not be an AIDS reference.

# Grimsley, Jim

## Standalone novels

### *Kirith Kirin (2000)*

#### G M

In a world where the cycle of change between an immortal King (Kirith Kirin) and Queen is out of balance, a young boy, Jessex, grows into his destined role as a powerful sorcerer and his desired relationship with Kirith Kirin.

Jessex's age is a continual complication and source of tension throughout the novel. He is fourteen when it begins, however Grimsley goes out of his way to point out that due to a different year-length in his world this is equivalent to sixteen. This rather begs the question of why the author prescribed a different year-length for the world to begin with, given that it has no other impact on the narrative. Kirith Kirin's followers are obsessed with propriety due to the King's obvious interest in Jessex: they make sure he does not court Jessex before he's of age and that they are not left alone together in case of rumour.

Some years later, when Jessex finally ascends to sorcery and the immortality of a second name, he eventually claims the rights of adulthood before officially coming of age, and he and Kirith Kirin formalise their relationship. This focus on the age difference between the characters (Kirith Kirin being an immortal) and on the impropriety of courting someone underage takes up more than half the novel, and may be a reaction to the trend in gay literature of representing relationships with underage characters. It is clear that in this culture same-sex relationships are entirely normal (though it is noted people from one region disapprove), but making advances to someone who is underage is utterly beyond the pale.

The constant romantic subtext throughout much of the novel, although well-realised and interlaced with the development of Jessex's character, wears thin after a time: due to the stylised and mythic nature of the characters and the writing, it reads more like a fantasy of courtly romance than one featuring developed or realistic characters.

Although passive and sometimes innocent, Jessex is not simply an object of desire: his perspective and the descriptive gaze it uses makes it clear he finds Kirith Kirin

attractive, and when he comes into his power he comes to him as an equal, demanding the King move past hinting and implication and declare his feelings. This results in their formalising their relationship with oaths and gifts, and there is a beautiful and directly-written scene of consummation, worthy of particular note due to a tendency for some authors to gloss or elide the sexual nature of gay relationships.

Their story comes to a tragic end, seemingly inevitably for this particular style of queer narrative. After Jessex destroys a threat to Kirith Kirin and is trapped in a coma for a hundred years until his lover awakens him with a kiss, the creator Goddess promises them the lifetime together that they are due, but that then the King and Queen must pass from the world as that cycle is over, with only Jessex remaining as the last immortal until the end of the world. Interestingly, despite the overall story being recalled by Jessex while alone after Kirith Kirin's death, the narrative itself ends with the two of them together and having been promised a lifetime of happiness: almost a rejection of the mandated ending that is to come.

Jessex's queer potential is evident: he comes from outside the context of the male-female duality cycle of the King and Queen to restore balance; however, the balance he restores leads to the cycle's final ending. He himself is refused the final closure he gives to the narrative: despite a suggested happiness with Kirith Kirin, he inevitably returns to loneliness, melancholy, and unfulfilled desire.

## Grundy, Stephan

### Standalone novels

#### *Attila's Treasure (1996)*

#### G Q

Hagan of the Burgundians is fostered with the Huns and becomes blood-brother to Waldhari, a Christian: the novel follows his sexual awakening and training as a shaman among the Huns. Hagan's unreciprocated and undeclared love for Waldhari is clear, and he considers blood-brotherhood to be the closest equivalent to what he really wants. Although eventually married to a woman by his family, Hagan's sexual orientation is clearly solely towards men.

His role as a trainee shaman (which often involves ritual cross-dressing, although Hagan is allowed to forego this) places him outside the gender binary in the segregated Hunnish society, allowing him to move in female spaces as well as male ones. It's noted that this sex segregation means that male love is not uncommon among the Huns. The Norse notion of unmanly behaviour also arises, applying both to homosexuality and to the practice of magic: Hagan's journey includes learning to overcome such limitations. Chosen by Odin as his servant, and later as one of his Valkyries, he again transgresses gender boundaries to fill this role. Despite occasional sexual encounters, Hagan's persistent loneliness and feeling of being set apart is related to both his being god-touched and his sexual orientation.

### Notes and related works

Grundy's previous novel *Rhinegold* was published before *Attila's Treasure*, but *Attila's Treasure* is a prequel of sorts to it. Despite this, *Rhinegold* has no queer elements, and there is very little overlap between the novels.

# Grundy, Stephan & Grundy, Melodi

## Standalone novels

### *Gilgamesh (2000)*

**G      B      M**

In this retelling of the Epic of Gilgamesh, the authors remain faithful to the source material while introducing an element of queer historicisation by focusing on rather than eliding the nature of the relationship between Gilgamesh and his friend, companion, and lover Enkidu.

Enkidu is created by the gods as a match for Gilgamesh, and is clearly the one great love of Gilgamesh's life. The homoeroticism of their battling masculinities, both in terms of clashing personalities and in literal wrestling, crosses all the way into sex and their becoming lovers. Their sexual and emotional relationship is made clear in the text, where they have frequent moments of both sexual and non-sexual intimacy. Their union is also blessed twice by the priestesses of Inanna. Although both characters take wives (Gilgamesh, as king, has three), their relationship with one another takes primacy: Enkidu's wife-to-be is pregnant with Gilgamesh's son, and Enkidu is delighted at the prospect of raising him. Enkidu's wasting away and death due to the gods' curse, and Gilgamesh's desperation to see him remembered, has a certain resonance with the age of AIDS, although this inference is not made in the text.

The LGBT presence is not confined to Enkidu and Gilgamesh: a number of minor characters are also represented, including a eunuch who paints his eyes to attract young men, and a male scholar with an interest in Enkidu, as well as a degree of lesbianism among the priestesses of Inanna.

# Gün, Güneli

## Standalone novels

### *On the Road to Baghdad (1991)*

L Q F

In this self-described picaresque fantasy based on the Arabian Nights, a young woman named Hürü careers through history and from place to place, discovering and enacting as many of the Thousand and One Nights as possible. Despite the surface impression of frantic adventure, Gün's work is a deliberate and complex piece of writing based on an interpretation of Sufi mysticism: the concept of the Teacher of the Age, and the author who can remove themselves from a text. The queer (in a non-sexual sense) nature of the novel is clear and intentional: Hürü wishes for a teacher who knows the beginning, the middle, and the end, but the teacher she receives – the Teacher of the Age himself – exists outside those linear patterns, dancing in a spiral through history, much like Hürü herself. Even Hürü's name does not escape queer exploration: Gün, using the literary device of a found text, provides an introduction where she variously derives it as based on *hourî* (the virginal reward-maiden) or *hoür* (the Turkish word for 'free'), and admits the interpretations cannot be reconciled.

Although Hürü has a relationship with an older woman at one point, her true queerness lies in her position within yet outside both Gün's novel and the Thousand and One Nights themselves: Hürü herself never quite feels fulfilled with her female lover, and the primary love of her life is a man. Her Teacher, however, is implied to be homosexual. Interestingly, this hinting changes to flaunting when he dies and Hürü is asked to pass on his mantle: it's claimed by a very camp dancing boy who dresses as a woman. Hürü's innate conservatism is challenged by the new Teacher, who rejects her notions of conventional morality and what the Teacher of the Age ought to be. This implies that the new Teacher is what the world needs, and perhaps that an age of implication and subtlety is shifting to an age of explicit and outrageous expression of the queer. The Teacher, however, playing on the expectations of others as to what he ought to be, will remain invisible.

## Hartman, Keith

### Series – Gumshoe

Set in an alternate-history near-future America divided on subcultural lines where gay issues are of great importance, this series spends as much time allowing the reader to explore its well-realised setting as it does progressing the novels' plots.

#### *The Gumshoe, the Witch, and the Virtual Corpse (1999)*

### G Q

In a near future where American society has fractured into insular subcultures, a gay detective supported by a vast array of other characters investigates a conspiracy. Two things stand out about *Gumshoe*: the gay future history it presents, and the divided society it suggests.

It is gradually revealed through hints and allusions throughout the novel that a sea-change occurred in gay society twenty years before. It becomes clear that this was the discovery of the gay gene: in Hartman's world, homosexuality is directly heritable and can be found in a blood test. He scatters second- and third-order consequences like landmines throughout the text: Catholic iconography such as the crucifix is now considered gay symbology ... because most young gay men are now Catholic ... because Catholics oppose abortion more than homosexuality ... leading to the realisation that orientation-selective abortion is now the norm in society.

An unanticipated consequence of a perfectly reliable test for homosexuality is that some teenage characters are entirely free to 'play' at homosexuality for the subcultural edge it conveys without it impacting their reputations: everyone at their school was blood-tested and confirmed as straight before admission. Another consequence, of course, are the implications that bisexuality does not exist in this world and that sexual orientation is entirely immutable and inflexible.

The consequences of a society splintered to the degree Hartman suggests are horrifying (and excellent satire as a result): where all media is designed to cater to the prejudices of the consumer, ghettoisation is natural (there are gay companies, and Baptist

companies, and Wiccan companies, all of whom employ members of their subcultures), and having meaningful conversations with outsiders is almost impossible. Not just queer separatism, but all separatism, is taken to its (il)logical extreme.

In keeping with the hard-boiled traditions of the genre, Drew (the gumshoe) is looking for a mature and illusion-free relationship with someone as jaded as himself. In fact, this is more a detective novel than a fantasy: that being said, the Wiccans in Hartman's setting practice verifiably real magic, as do a number of other cultures: a two-spirited or perhaps transgender (the text is unclear) Indian shaman also makes an appearance.

A difference that may be overlooked on first reading is that in Hartman's alternate future and past the AIDS epidemic clearly never existed: instead the gay gene's discovery plays out an entirely different history of subcultural trauma and transformation.

### **Notes and related works**

Hartman's sequel to *The Gumshoe, the Witch, and the Virtual Corpse*, *Gumshoe Gorilla* (2001), lay outside the time period of the research.



## Huff, Tanya

### Series – Four Quarters

Set in a world where sexual orientation of all types is fully integrated into the cultural norms – for example, a prince might be just as likely to make an alliance marriage with another prince as a princess – this series of loosely-connected novels follow a kingdom's Bards, who wield magic by petitioning elemental spirits of earth, air, fire, and water.

#### *Sing the Four Quarters (1994)*

L B F

Annice, a princess who renounced her title to follow her Bardic gifts, causes political problems when she inadvertently becomes pregnant and the father of her child is framed for treason. The bisexual Annice is in a long-term nonmonogamous relationship with a lesbian woman, Stasya. There is also a cultural practice of 'contract births', where a couple make arrangements to have a child together for one of them to raise: effectively a surrogacy agreement.

This novel is more about pregnancy than sexual orientation, but deserves particular mention for the unselfconscious way it presents same-sex relationships as an unquestioned and normal part of its society and its characters' lives. Also, Annice, Stasya, and the child's father arrange to raise the child together but do not enter into a romantic relationship, going against the trend of other such novels.

#### *Fifth Quarter (1995)*

L G B R

Bannon and Vrie, a brother and sister pair of assassins for a foreign Empire, encounter a sorcerer who steals Bannon's body, resulting in Bannon's soul sharing Vrie's body. Both Bannon and Vrie appear to be bisexual and have a significant sexual undertone to their relationship: however, this is diminished rather than enhanced by their sharing a body.

Bannon's traumatic loss of identity is dealt with quite seriously, and his discomfort at no longer being in a male body is explored. When they team up with the body thief, Gyhard, in order to oppose Gyhard's mentor as the greater threat, Vrie ends up sharing her body with Gyhard's soul instead once Bannon is returned to his own.

*No Quarter (1996)*

**L G B R**

A direct sequel to *Fifth Quarter*, this follows Vrie/Gyhard as they attempt (ultimately successfully) to ethically find a body for him: Vrie remains bisexual, and it appears Gyhard is also. Working with the Bards to help, one speculates as to whether a male soul could be in a female body, or whether gender is an aspect of physical form, but this is not explored further (although, in this setting at least, Bannon's intense discomfort in *Fifth Quarter* at sharing a female body suggests there are aspects of gender linked to the soul). The intrinsic presence and consistent background of same-sex pairings in this setting is continued, with many minor characters being in such relationships. It is a testament to the subtlety of Huff's writing that she makes such representation appear incidental and not an overt statement (although it is, of course, its own statement).

*The Quartered Sea (1999)*

**G B M R**

Set approximately a decade after *No Quarter*, Benedikt, a Bard who can only manipulate water (which is considered something of a disability), is sent on a voyage of discovery but is shipwrecked and indentured on a foreign continent. His exploration of a new culture and the efforts of Bannon, who has become infatuated with him, to arrange a rescue, are the main focus of the novel. Benedikt, like Bannon, is bisexual, and also has a sexual relationship with the sexless (and mostly genderless) elemental spirits of water due to the strength of his abilities. Bannon's more mature approach to sex and relationships is a notable shift in his character, and is contrasted with Benedikt's initial instability and emotional immaturity.

## **Standalone novels**

### *Gate of Darkness, Circle of Light (1989)*

**G B R**

Set in contemporary Toronto, this novel follows three characters – Roland, Rebecca, and Daru – who call a power of the Light to help them against a power of the Dark threatening the city. When the power of Light manifests as a beautiful young man, Evan, the ostensibly straight Roland finds his immediate attraction to him both upsetting and intriguing. Evan’s sexuality is a function of his nature as (effectively) an angel: those who seek the Light metaphorically have a very literal attraction to Evan: among other things, this makes clear that the powers of Light have no issue with homosexuality.

Another point of interest is the depiction of Rebecca, who has severe intellectual disability: Daru (her social worker) fights for her independence at every turn, including her sexual independence and right to make her own choices in that regard. This comes to a head when Evan sleeps with Rebecca: Daru calls Roland out on his outrage, making it clear he is only upset due to his desire to be with Evan himself.

Roland sees his attraction to Evan as a direct threat to his (straight) sexual orientation, despite not finding men other than Evan attractive: he can’t reconcile a sexual and emotional same-sex attraction to a man that is contradictory to his own understanding of himself. Huff takes an interesting approach, as at no point does Roland come across as closeted or even as bisexual: he is a straight man who is being presented with an outside-context attraction and deals with its ramifications. When finally confronted with the Dark, where a rejection of Evan would mean a rejection of the Light, Roland admits his love for Evan despite his gender. With this in mind, Evan’s inevitable departure before their relationship goes any further seems a tease on the author’s part, and perhaps betrays a reluctance to actually depict a true gay romance or relationship rather than a tortured and ostensibly straight ambiguity.

### *The Fire’s Stone (1990)*

**G B M R**

A thief, prince, and sorceress travel together in an attempt to retrieve a magical jewel. The thief, Aaron, and prince, Darvish, slowly establish a relationship over the course of the novel, complicated by their various personal problems.

Raised in an oppressive and intolerant religious culture that burns homosexuals to death, Aaron represses his sexuality and tries to avoid any temptation: although his interest throughout the text is solely in Darvish, his past romance with his female cousin may construct him as bisexual. Darvish, by contrast, is an easygoing and sexually open bisexual who casually flirts with everyone: his character is given greater depth when his alcoholism, originally played for laughs, is taken entirely seriously when he goes through withdrawal after a shipwreck. When they are magically soul-linked to prevent Aaron's escape from their mission it gives them greater insight into one another: ironically, Aaron later attempts to dismiss his feelings for Darvish as being solely due to that magical link. There is a great deal of subtext and affection between them, and they become friends before they become lovers.

Chandra the sorceress' role in enabling and establishing their relationship is an interesting one. Promised to Darvish in a treaty marriage, she has no interest in sexuality and there are hints that sex might weaken her magical abilities. Rather, she seems very interested in Aaron and Darvish's romance and goes out of her way to attempt to get them together. Her interest in their relationship goes beyond 'caring' or 'meddling', all the way to 'eroticising': it's quite possible she is an affectionate satire of the (primarily female) authors of male/male 'slash' romantic fiction.

Although Chandra ultimately goes through with her treaty marriage to Darvish, it's understood between them all that it is purely a matter of form and that Darvish's true relationship will be with Aaron: in a symbolic gesture, Chandra arranges the colours of their wedding to represent all three of them.

### **Notes and related works**

Huff's 'Blood' series, beginning with *Blood Price* (1991), was considered horror rather than fantasy and thus excluded from the research despite its containing primary LGBT characters.

# Ings, Simon

## Standalone novels

### *City of the Iron Fish (1994)*

G B M

In Ings' strange meta-narrative, the faux-Victorian City (its only name) ruled by elaborate custom and ritual is entirely isolated from the outside world, if one ever existed: sufficient unto itself, it is changed and remade every twenty years through the ritual of the Iron Fish, although the degree of change caused by the ritual has diminished to almost nothing.

Following a young man, Thomas, from twelve to thirty-two, the narrative explores his emergent sexuality as well as his investigations of the City's boundaries. He weathers an abusive relationship with an older mentor while ignoring a potential love of his life. Although his formative and primary sexual experiences are with men, Thomas' sexuality (following as he does a rake's-progress moral decline) is best described as bisexual.

Explicitly and deliberately a queer novel, the characters of *City of the Iron Fish* discuss traditions and how they provide context for their own subversion, the fundamental limits of meaning that enclose their City, and the feeling of insufficiency in the world. In a pivotal scene, Thomas and his friend Blythe leave the City, only to find a literal boundary to their world, beyond which form and structure no longer hold meaning. As the City finally collapses around them, torn apart by those unable to accept its limitations, the novel concludes with the 'sufficiency of the world being made manifest'. The City folds in upon itself, swallowing up all meaning and context, then expresses every possible permutation of itself at the same time, with its pasts, presents, and futures, and citizens living and dead, all present simultaneously. In the midst of this perfect queer expression, with all boundaries permeable, Thomas and Blythe slip beyond the limits of their world and enter another, successfully escaping the limits not only of their City, but also of their text.

## Notes and related works

The novel's title is frequently miswritten as *City of the Ironfish*.

## Jakober, Marie

### Standalone novels

#### *The Black Chalice (2000)*

#### G R

Paul, a middle-aged monk in early feudal Germany, attempts to write the memoirs of his youth as he wishes to remember them, but is instead cursed by a sorceress to write only the truth. Under her curse he writes of his time as a squire to Sir Karelian, a crusader knight, and how he betrayed Karelian to his death.

The younger Paul's love/obsession for Karelian and his hatred for his own homosexuality are both evident, and these two strands of his character ultimately become indistinguishable: when Karelian makes an advance, encouraged by Paul's clear interest, Paul rejects him and comes to hate him for it. Karelian's later advice to Paul about the commonness of sexual contact between men, intended to reassure him and deal with his evident self-hate, falls on deaf ears.

A secondary plot element is the continued worship of the old pagan gods: Karelian is initiated into this tradition by the sorceress, and becomes the old gods' champion. The older pagan religions are portrayed as sexually aware and empowering of women, while Christianity is seen as the reverse and integral to Paul's suppression of his desires. The social and cultural revulsion for homosexuality is accurately represented, and its unnaturalness and perversion from an early Christian perspective are acknowledged.

## **Jones, Mary**

### **Standalone novels**

#### *Avalon (1991)*

#### **L F**

This Arthurian tale is the story of Argante, Guinevere's child by Lancelot, and her upbringing on the isle of Avalon. Avalon is represented as a primarily lesbian utopia, ruled by women who worship the Goddess. Argante's stormy relationship with her lover Elin is chronicled, and Argante's ultimate ascension as the Lady of Avalon and her handfasting with Elin end the novel. Avalon's entire population is composed of babies exposed by other tribes, rescued by Avalon's scouts: this makes it a community of outcasts and the unwanted, giving it particular queer resonance. Although the frame of the novel is Argante remembering the tale in her old age, with the fall of Avalon imminent, this frame is not returned to in the ending, instead staying with a moment of hope in a perfected past.

## Kane, Daniel

### Standalone novels

#### *Power and Magic (1987)*

#### L G M

In this complex and messy text, two young men – one from a fantasy world and the other from contemporary London – intersect in a poorly-realised quest for a mystical artifact, in a world where homosexuality is oppressed and exiled. In particular, homosexuality is identified with an ethnic group, Ethnorian, who have notable physical features (blond hair, especially). This suggests a construction of homosexuality as an essential and physical quality, but this is contradicted by references to some men successfully concealing their Ethnorian nature to fit into society. There are also Ethnorian women, and one such character takes a significant role.

As much an allegory as it is a fantasy, Kane's characters are pitted against the Demon King Dais, an obvious and deliberate anagram of AIDS, and claim the Key to Power and Magic to defeat him. Confusingly, this Key appears to represent faith and is a golden cross: the text itself, however, rejects institutionalised religion for the harm it has done to gay people.

Despite its many flaws, *Power and Magic* is notable for its representation – possibly unique in the genre – of the concept of gayness/homosexuality as a distinct cultural identity in the contemporary sense being directly introduced to a fantasy world. The Londoner attempts to explain the cultural concept of 'gay' and the oppression of homosexuality to a Gilgamesh-esque mythic hero, later his lover, with little success, reflecting the difficulties in directly representing LGBT identities in fantasy. Despite the mythic hero's repeated claims that there should be no limits on love, both of them are disgusted and horrified to later learn they are father and son and accidentally incestuous, which seems inconsistent with their rejecting the idea of cultural taboos on sexuality.



## Kerr, Peg

### Standalone novels

#### *The Wild Swans (1999)*

#### G M

An AIDS narrative that draws from the power of myth and fairytale, Kerr's novel intercuts between two related but unconnected stories: Eliza, a young woman of the 17th century, lives the story of the Hans Christian Andersen fairytale, where her brothers are cursed to turn into swans and she must remain voiceless for seven years while weaving shirts of nettles to free them; Elias, a young gay man in the early 1980s, comes to New York, finds a relationship, and witnesses the beginning of the AIDS epidemic.

The influence of the two stories on one another is subtle and beautifully handled: Eliza's voicelessness evokes the slogan 'Silence = Death' and nearly leads to her own demise, while her brothers feel tainted and exiled from society due to their curse, unable to have families or live normal lives: her youngest brother describes the effects of the curse as a rape. Elias's overcoming his self-hate for being gay and his developing relationship with the writer Seán is slowly and sweetly explored without making the characters saccharine stereotypes. Seán is happily nonmonogamous and goes to gay bathhouses for sex; while Elias has no problem with this, he chooses not to sleep with anyone else. When Seán tells Elias the story of the Children of Lir (another swan-change folktale) he comments that they all die when the curse is broken.

AIDS slowly enters Elias and Seán's lives, and it becomes clear they both are infected: Seán discovers Elias was faithful and blames himself for infecting him, feeling he's being punished by God for being gay. In the 17th century, Eliza is persecuted by a secretly homosexual magistrate who loves her husband. The final scene, with Elias at the unveiling of the AIDS quilt after Seán has died, shows a panel on the quilt of the wild swans in flight, with a girl and her youngest brother there to bear witness.

Kerr's storytelling confronts the reader with troubling questions. There was magic in the past; why not in the present? There was a happy ending for Eliza; why not for Elias? What if all the pain and silence and suffering, weaving shirts from nettles, achieved

nothing? What was it all for? Kerr leaves her readers with that very question, but she neither promises nor offers an answer, only the image of swans taking flight. The novel concludes with an author's note, where Kerr comments that the story in real life is incomplete because the curse has not yet been broken.

## **Kushner, Ellen**

### **Series – Riverside**

Taking place in an unnamed city with a Renaissance-like culture, the Riverside series (named for the unsalubrious district frequented by many of Kushner's characters) explores issues of social obligation, identity, and mental illness with a dark and captivating use of pacing and narrative structure.

#### *Swordspoint (1987)*

#### **G B M**

Kushner's fantasy of manners interlaces several plotlines, all of which ultimately centre on Richard St Vier, a famous swordsman (duelist to the death for hire) and his lover Alec.

Richard and Alec's relationship is absolutely central to the text, and is as dysfunctional as their characters. Alec is erratic, suicidal, and depressed, frequently threatening self-harm or manipulating Richard's emotions; Richard is excessively stoic and has no compunction about killing people who threaten his lover, even when Alec starts the fights on purpose. The tension between them is rooted in the unspoken – Richard has no idea of Alec's past, and doesn't care – and comes to a head when Alec is kidnapped to manipulate Richard into taking a contract. They are alternately deeply angry and highly sexual with one another, with occasional moments of raw and tender emotion: as desperately flawed characters who nonetheless complement one another perfectly, their portrayal is magnificent. Alec's rescue of Richard through playing politics, and his decision to return to his lover or kill himself, shifts the power dynamic between them, redeeming and reinterpreting his character. It should also be noted that despite both characters being flawed, depressive, and broken, it is never suggested in any way that these things are related to their sexualities.

A third viewpoint character, Lord Michael Godwin, is bisexual and has relationships with both men and women during the novel: his rejection of an older man inspires one of the plots, and a lover of his is harangued by his wife for his inability to give her children, suggesting a social pressure for men of that class to marry regardless of

preference or sexual orientation. Comments from other characters throughout the novel suggest that a certain degree of bisexuality is the norm.

### **Notes and related works**

The later novels in the 'Riverside' series/setting fall outside the time period of the research.

## Lackey, Mercedes

### Series – The Last Herald-Mage

Much of Lackey's work takes place within Lackey's Valdemar setting, where Heralds are divinely chosen protectors of the kingdom. 'The Last Herald-Mage', set in the mythic history of the setting more than half a millennium before the 'Mage Storms' series, follows the life of Vanyel Ashkevron. Vanyel, in addition to being Valdemar's greatest mythic hero, is also gay, and this has a dramatic influence on his life. His isolation from his family, traumatic coming-out experience, and overall tragic narrative have made him the prototypical 'gay mage' stereotype in popular fantasy, as well as one of its most visibly gay characters.

This series' melodrama, association of its gay characters with deep personal tragedy, and excessive stereotyping have led to its being considered a problematic work of LGBT fantasy. However, at the time there were few other models of positive representation in the genre, and it may well have been necessary to stereotype the characters in order to clearly 'mark' their homosexuality to the reader: at the time the series was written, a non-gay reader might have expected such an exaggerated representation and overlooked a more nuanced or subtle one. The scope of the series is also staggering: in turn, these novels deal with coming out to oneself, seeking acceptance from one's family, and finding a stable relationship and life partner. In many ways, Lackey was exploring new territory here, and created a map of queer life experience in so doing.

### *Magic's Pawn (1989)*

#### G M

Covering Vanyel's rural upbringing, move to the capital city of Haven, and eventual initiation as a Herald, as well as his realisation of his sexuality and traumatic first relationship, this novel covers a great deal of ground. Vanyel's representation as a gay youth is stereotypical, with a love for music and clothing, a dislike of 'manly' activities, and an attractively androgynous appearance. His overwhelming loneliness as a youth and resulting emotional isolation is analogous to being closeted, and leads to an inability to

form connections with other people: again, a very relatable queer experience. What is interesting is that Vanyel's father is fully aware of his son's proto-homosexuality, and ensures Vanyel never encounters the concept, with the hope of altering his sexual orientation.

Lackey takes Vanyel through a carousel of positive and negative queer experiences: he is fostered with an aunt who realises and accepts his sexual orientation, and encourages his first relationship with her student Tyrendel; he comes to self-identify as *shay'a'chern* (gay/homosexual); he and Tyrendel form a magical lifebond (a spiritual link between destined partners in Lackey's setting). Tyrendel's dramatic death, Vanyel's subsequent suicide attempt, and his choosing as a Herald return the story to melodramatic tragedy. Ultimately Vanyel survives through the intervention of queer mentors: practitioners of strange magic from outside Valdemar who have a different and more accepting perspective on homosexuality and counsel him.

The nature of homosexuality is discussed in detail, with many characters speaking (sometimes exhaustively) to its presence in nature and its lack of wrongness: Lackey's intention is clearly to convince, or perhaps to educate, given the novel's marketing as young adult fiction. The society of Valdemar is shown to disapprove of *shay'a'chern* in general, and some religious sects consider them 'tainted': Vanyel, at his aunt's suggestion, conceals his relationship with Tyrendel through homophobic bullying in public.

Lackey consistently represents being Chosen as a Herald (by a divine horselike Companion) as a feeling of unconditional love and acceptance, giving Vanyel's Choosing even greater queer resonance and suggesting the higher powers of her world fundamentally approve of and accept his nature as a gay man. When Vanyel himself finally accepts his destiny as a Herald, then, he is also accepting himself.

### *Magic's Promise (1990)*

## G

Vanyel, now a man in his thirties and a famous Herald, seeks stability in his life. His lack of a long-term partner and fundamental loneliness is clear. Although Vanyel is a mythic hero, the focus is consistently on his identity and relationships: most of his actual heroism happens offstage. A significant plot element is Vanyel's slow efforts to recover a relationship with his father, who always knew Vanyel was *shay'a'chern* and couldn't

accept this fact.

A large number of incidental queer issues also arise: Vanyel has fathered several children at friends' requests, including for a lesbian couple; he confuses his feelings of friendship for women at one point for sexual attraction and questions his orientation (leading to the awkward implication that bisexuality does not exist); the idea of gay men making straight marriages for appearance's sake is discussed, and concluded to end poorly for everyone involved. In two different incidents underage boys attempt to seduce Vanyel for various reasons: he refuses them both, and the distinction between homosexuality and paedophilia is heavily belaboured. Finally, when Vanyel has a vision of Death (known in one aspect as the Shadow-Lover) he sees Death as a beautiful young man, while a straight male friend sees her as a woman: since this aspect of Death appears as the perfect lover, this once again gives supernatural (and divine) sanction to same-sex attraction.

### *Magic's Price (1990)*

## G M

Vanyel finds love for a second time in his life with a younger man, Stefen, before succumbing to his tragic destiny and death. His difficulty with the age difference between them (Vanyel is in his mid-to-late thirties and Stefen is approximately nineteen) is an obstacle; however, they become lifebonded and it is revealed to the reader (though not the couple) that Stefen is the reincarnation of Tylendel. Vanyel also reconciles fully with his father, who accepts Stefen as his partner. Lackey addresses some additional myths surrounding homosexuality: the abuse and neglect Stefen suffered as a child is unrelated to his sexual orientation (in which he is confident, unlike Vanyel as a young man), and the son Vanyel sired is himself straight, giving the lie to an idea of inherited homosexuality. The usual melodrama recurs when Vanyel is gang-raped by a troupe of bandits and Stefen oversees his mental and physical recovery, although the trauma is dealt with realistically and sensitively.

Vanyel's prophesied death defending the border of Valdemar, and Stefen's link to him, leads to a conclusion where after Stefen's natural death from old age their spirits are bound together to watch over Valdemar's border in the Forest of Sorrows, locating queerness at the boundaries in a very literal way while inextricably associating it with tragedy.

## Series – The Mage Storms

Set in Lackey's Valdemar centuries after *Magic's Price*, where magical repercussions from an ancient apocalypse are echoing forward through time and risk destroying the world, the 'Mage Storms' series is preceded by Lackey's 'Mage Winds' trilogy which establishes a great deal of context: however, that series lacks primary LGBT characters. The introduction of a character new to this context, Karal, a young priest from a foreign country, allows a re-presentation and recontextualisation of information as necessary. Two queer characters who had minor roles in the 'Mage Winds' trilogy recur in 'Mage Storms' and become major viewpoint characters: An'desha, a young man freed from his possession by an ancient evil, and Firesong, a powerful and flamboyant mage of the Tayledras tribal culture who is incidentally a descendant of Vanyel Ashkevron.

In many ways, this trilogy is Lackey's response to her 'Last Herald-Mage' trilogy: its primary theme is the repercussions of the past affecting the present; it presents a new, more realistic, and more positive view of gay characters and relationships; it also finally gives Vanyel and Stefen's ghosts a more permanent resolution, literally and metaphorically.

Although examination of the individual novels focuses almost exclusively on Firesong and An'desha's relationship, the overall tone of the series is practical and pragmatic, with characters using logic and problem-solving to deal with issues as they arise. For example, the mage storms themselves are solved through the application of science and mathematics to predict their patterns and to discover a way of negating them.

### *Storm Warning (1994)*

#### **G B M**

An'desha and Firesong became lovers between the 'Mage Winds' trilogy and the beginning of this one, and the dynamics of their dysfunctional relationship are explored in depth. An'desha is emotionally damaged due to his possession and trauma and is using Firesong as emotional security, while Firesong is desperate to have someone as a serious and permanent lover and wants An'desha to be that person. At one point An'desha worries that the trauma he suffered had changed his sexual orientation, but realises Firesong is one of the only men he finds attractive: this resonates with, and dismisses, fears of homosexuality



deriving from childhood sexual abuse or from rape. Bisexuality as a concept is rarely acknowledged, as in Lackey's other works: Firesong is jealous of An'desha's friendship with Karal (seeing him as a potential rival) but not of any female friends he might have.

The sheer unhealthiness of their relationship is demonstrated not only by Firesong's fear that when An'desha is no longer frightened and dependent he might leave him, but also by the age and experience differential between them: An'desha is roughly fifteen while Firesong is in his early to mid-thirties. Although An'desha has genuine feelings for Firesong, it's clear their relationship is doomed and that it may be a good thing for both of them: a realistic, if unromantic, perspective.

### *Storm Rising (1995)*

## G M

As An'desha grows more independent throughout this novel, Firesong becomes increasingly unstable and desperate. It's revealed he idealises lifebonding (the magical link between divinely-sanctioned lovers) and wants one himself, but fears he may never find that person. Strangely, at one point An'desha thinks that almost all gay men Firesong's age are either partnered or fundamentally damaged, which is an uncomfortable assumption to encounter: Firesong later thinks something very similar.

It is made clear that Firesong realises An'desha's dependence was unhealthy and made efforts to discourage it, and that he hadn't intended to manipulate An'desha to begin with. However, his obsession leads him to some frightening lines of thought, including considering using blood and death magic to live forever in order to find a perfect lover: Firesong has heard of Vanyel's relationship lasting forever and wants something similar.

Conveniently, he meets with an old friend of his, Silverfox, who is also gay, and they discuss his need for this kind of relationship. Silverfox mercilessly punctures the idea of lifebonded relationships as perfect, pointing out they are effectively a geas of mutual love and that he prefers the idea of choosing to love someone. Here Lackey brings the ideal down to the real by taking a more practical approach than the angst and romanticism of her earlier series and poking fun at her previous novels. While Silverfox himself is clearly attracted to Firesong, he also points out that An'desha, given his history, may be happiest without a strong emotional bond to anyone: it becomes clear that their relationship is slowly dissolving.

## *Storm Breaking (1996)*

### G M

At the climax of the series, the primary characters stand against the final mage storm and channel power to divert it and break up its impact. As one result, Firesong – known for his beauty – is terribly scarred. The ghosts of Vanyel and Stefen/Tylendel also assist and are destroyed, moving on to the next world and closing that circle. It's noted that what they did (remaining as spirits to protect Valdemar) made sense at the time, but shouldn't have persisted as long as it did: there is of course a double meaning for how their story was portrayed in Lackey's earlier books, being 'of its time'. Firesong, fearing nobody will want him, is comforted by Silverfox, who admits his love for him and they establish a relationship.

Some minor notes include the sentient sword Need, which can only be wielded by a woman, giving herself to Firesong as there were no women at the final confrontation and he, as a gay man, was considered the least objectionable wielder. It's also suggested that An'desha may take a shamanistic path that, in his culture, requires an asexual devotion to the Goddess: this is considered possibly the healthiest resolution for him.

#### **Notes and related works**

As mentioned, Lackey's 'Mage Winds' series (beginning with the 1991 *Winds of Fate*) is integral to the plot of 'Mage Storms': however, its lack of primary LGBT characters (Firesong and An'desha, primary characters in 'Mage Storms', are minor characters in this series) led to its being excluded from the research.

Lackey's Valdemar novels in general are known for their inclusion and representation of LGBT characters, but only the novels listed here both have primary LGBT characters and fall within the time period of the research.

## Lackey, Mercedes & Guon, Ellen

### Series – Bedlam’s Bard

This is a long series written by several combinations of authors following Eric Banyon, a Renaissance Faire folk musician who gains bardic magical ability and uses it to support a hidden race of elves. Although the first novel has some teasingly queer elements, these are downplayed in the later books and diminish almost to nothing after the introduction of another heterosexual love interest for Eric: with this in mind, only the first book, *Knight of Ghosts and Shadows*, is listed.

#### *Knight of Ghosts and Shadows (1990)*

### G B R

Eric accidentally awakens an elven knight, Korendil (Kory), while playing music, and the two of them, along with Eric’s friend Beth, work to prevent the destruction of a sacred site that would also destroy the elves.

The novel makes a point of using heavy subtext to imply a potential relationship between Eric and Kory: Eric, who is straight, finds Korendil very attractive and forms an emotional attachment to him. This disturbs his identity: not in the way that a character who refused to confront their homosexuality might be upset when forced to face it by such an attraction; rather, Eric is forced to deal with an attraction outside his personal context and incorporate it into his identity. It reads as though the authors are deliberately overemphasising these elements rather than writing the character’s self-expression authentically. Ultimately, Eric, Kory and Beth establish a group relationship and three-way magical bond, though whether sexual contact exists between Eric and Kory is never directly addressed: they merely kiss once.

Given Kory’s nature as an elf and the elves’ powers of glamour and seduction in both the text and the folklore it is derived from, there is a strong case to be made that Eric’s love is the result of being (unknowingly) glamoured by Korendil. This would be a very convenient mechanism through which to explore a supposedly straight character’s sudden and inexplicable attraction to a man while still maintaining his valued (by the reader)

heterosexual label. Engaging in actual gay sexual contact would remove this label, which is why the characters do not do so.

### **Notes and related works**

Later volumes in the 'Bedlam's Bard' series were written by various combinations of authors: Lackey & Guon; Guon as sole author; Lackey & (Rosemary) Edghill. As *Knight of Ghosts and Shadows* (by Lackey & Guon) is the only text of the series under discussion, the series has been listed under Lackey & Guon's names for convenience.

## Lai, Larissa

### Standalone novels

#### *When Fox is a Thousand (1995)*

#### L F

This complicated narrative based on Chinese mythology is told in three voices: the fox; a ninth-century lesbian poet; an unnamed twentieth-century narrator. The (female) fox has haunted women for a thousand years, and was outcast by other foxes for her transgressive behaviour: haunting women and scholars was acceptable, but possessing the bodies of the dead was a transgression too far. At one point the fox's family, grudgingly accepting of her 'unnatural' behaviour (this refers to her magic, although the queer implication is obvious) ask her if she has to *write* about these things as well as do them: it is clear Lai is speaking wryly from a queer author's experience. The historical poet's experiences with women, relationships, jealousy, and murder is touched on, and it is revealed that the fox has been using her body for a thousand years.

The modern narrative follows a number of Canadian women of Asian descent, exploring identity and marginalisation from a racial as well as a queer perspective. Their complex (primarily lesbian) relationships and social difficulties are examined in depth. It's mentioned that one character's brother was disowned by his family for being gay, and was later killed in a gay-bashing in Toronto.

Just as the fox transgresses by inhabiting the dead, she transgresses the boundaries of history, mixing narratives of the past and present while establishing a lesbian presence in both. When she finally achieves divinity at the age of a thousand, she reluctantly accepts that mixing the mortal and divine is too much of a transgression and removes herself from the world.

## **Lynn, Elizabeth A.**

### **Series – Karadur Atani**

Set in a harsh and brutal setting where local lords have the power of life and death, Lynn's series focuses far more on personal relationships than background detail and is notable for the relatively small geographic scope of most of its characters' lives. The titular Karadur's brutality and (sometimes) cruelty is both unexpected and unusual for a sympathetic main character, and it is generally accepted as the norm by the other characters due to his rank.

### *Dragon's Winter (1998)*

#### **G B M**

Taking place over a number of years, the narrative follows Karadur Atani, a lord who can take the form of a dragon. Inadvertently betrayed by his lover Azil (and deliberately so by his brother), when Azil returns three years later broken by torture Karadur takes him in and works to defeat his sorcerer brother.

Azil and Karadur's relationship is portrayed very differently over time: initially, they are shown as secure partners, but Azil's fear for Karadur's sanity if he takes dragon-form leads to his betrayal. Afterwards, the trust between them is gone and Azil is terribly damaged as a person: they move very slowly towards resolution and reunification over a long period. This pattern, the reverse of a typical romance, shows the mature reintegration of flawed people who have hurt one another, an unusual but fascinating portrayal. The shift in power dynamic between them is also evident: almost equals before, Karadur clearly has the power in their relationship afterwards. The tension between them, both sexual and otherwise, is drawn out for the entire novel, with every attempt at reconciliation interrupted: when they finally reconcile and consummate their new relationship, the unnatural ice on the land melts in one night, perhaps in relief.

One of Azil's fears for their relationship was that Karadur would need to sire a child, and therefore might leave him for a woman. Karadur promises this will never come between them, and Azil accepts its necessity: the novel therefore ends with Karadur courting a woman with whom he plans to have a child. Although there is no implication

that she is in any way as important to him as Azil, nor does he intend to marry her, Lynn's choice to end the novel with Karadur courting this woman is an interesting one. The convention of ending a story with a heterosexual coupling comes close to taking primacy over the relationship in the actual text, almost implying there is an insufficiency to Karadur's relationship with Azil. Rather than Azil, a character who arrives almost from outside the context of the narrative inhabits the final paragraph, and this is awkward and uncomfortable.

The summary on the back cover, perhaps unsurprisingly, entirely omits the queer relationship that is the focus of the novel, instead choosing to frame the novel as a brother versus brother conflict based on the murder of Karadur's people. Although this did happen, the kidnap and torture of his lover is of far greater significance to the narrative.

### **Notes and related works**

The second novel in this series, *Dragon's Treasure* (2003), lies outside the time period of the research. A third novel was planned by Lynn but is ten years overdue as of 2015 and is unlikely ever to be written.<sup>8</sup>

Lynn's previous fantasy series, 'The Chronicles of Tornor' (1979-1980) is notable for being one of the earliest fantasy series to contain queer protagonists and homosexual relationships in any form, although it lies outside the time period of the research.

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<sup>8</sup> Online comment from Elizabeth Lynn, July 25 2015: '[...] I do not think the rest of Karadur's story will ever be told. I regret it. I am delighted that you enjoyed *Dragon's Winter* and *Dragon's Treasure*.' Retrieved from <http://www.watt-ohugh.com/2012/10/where-have-you-gone-elizabeth-a-lynn/> on 22 August 2015.

## **Macer, T. P.**

### **Standalone novels**

#### *The Sorcerer's Web (2000)*

#### **G M R**

Morgan, an assassin trained and magically conditioned by villainous sorcerers, falls in love with his target Adam Pell, a ranger and scout, and the two of them begin a relationship. Although the sexual elements are present from the beginning and often explicit, this is not solely an erotic novel: that being said, the immediate attraction between both characters is noted by both of them as uncharacteristic and never explained, which is the stuff of cliché. The descriptive gaze of the characters is upfront and sexualised throughout. The setting has no prejudice against homosexuality, and has a useful way to talk about sexual orientation: a friend of Pell's is described as a 'woman's man', which is perhaps also a play on masculinity and being a 'man's man'.

The relationship between Morgan and Pell is one of equals for the most part, and later becomes a monogamous relationship: however, Morgan's past abuse not only makes it difficult for him to engage actively with sex, it also causes him great pain during sex. When Morgan's past is revealed, he is imprisoned as a threat and later used to help destroy the sorcerers. Morgan's narrative focuses on his repressed sexuality and his repressed magical abilities, both the result of abuse: the second part of the novel involves Pell using drastic methods to force him to admit his magical gift (which he associates with the sorcerers who abused him) so it can be controlled and he can be spared from execution. The novel takes a very dark tone from this point onwards, as Pell – with the approval of the authorities – declares Morgan a traitor to him due to his assassin past, claims Morgan as a slave, and proceeds to abuse him physically and psychologically in an attempt to break his conditioning. Although ostensibly done out of love and for Morgan's own benefit, this crosses the line into exploitation, and makes this part of the text deeply uncomfortable.

That being said, the final part of the novel deals with this directly: once Morgan is restored and better-integrated, Pell hates himself for what he did to Morgan because he enjoyed it on some level. Although his previous behaviour is not represented as sane or



healthy BDSM, Pell confuses his innate interest in domination and sadistic play with being an abuser. Once Morgan realises this, he laughs at Pell and explains the difference between true abuse and what Pell wants, drawing on his own experience of abuse from the sorcerers: this allows them to reestablish a healthy companionate and loving relationship that can also draw on elements of BDSM play.

Macer's voice is clear here, writing as a reassurance to those with BDSM sexual interests that they are not abusers: the text, in addition to eroticism and story, provides an educational function for the reader.

## Marks, Laurie

### Standalone novels

#### *Dancing Jack (1993)*

#### L B F

Rys, a riverboat pilot, and Ash, a farmer and former revolutionary, are reunited years after the revolution and attempt to rekindle a relationship. The trauma of war and the failed revolution has taken a toll on both characters, who bring a more mature and darker perspective to the fantasy romance: Rys helps Ash search an abandoned house for the scattered bones of her family. Having held a torch for Ash for years despite Ash's past relationship with the charismatic (male) revolutionary leader, Rys is upfront with her desire for Ash to choose a relationship with her. Rys' inherent gift of supernatural perception is echoed in her consistent honesty with herself and with Ash, and both characters are very practical and realistic people. Their pragmatism is honoured with a moment of true magic, where Rys dies protecting Ash and returns to life when Ash admits she wanted to be with her: this affirms not only Ash's ability to create as well as destroy, but also the intrinsic importance of their relationship to their lives. Subverting the trend of immediate resolution, the characters part ways until Rys' retirement a few years later, where she brings herself and her dowry to Ash. This gesture, both practical and romantic, shows the importance of dramatic choices (the novel ends with Ash declaring she chooses Rys) while also rejecting an over-romantic ideal.

The novel itself walks the line of fantasy and pragmatic reality – Rys's gift of perception is inherently magical, but is inextricable from her honesty and ability to read people; Ash's ability to bring life from death is both metaphorical and literal – perhaps ultimately making the point that even in a fantasy both people and relationships require practicality in order to have a place for magic. Marks' setting clearly has no taboo against homosexual relationships, and the fact of the characters' genders is never considered relevant to their romance or their potential for a life together.

## **Notes and related works**

Marks' 'Children of the Triad' series (beginning in 1989 with *Delan the Mislaid*) was ultimately excluded from the research due to all of its characters being hermaphroditic genderless nonhumans; it was felt that this made it impossible to categorise or fit Marks' characters into the context of the research and placed their status as LGBT/queer characters in significant doubt.

## Merlis, Mark

### Standalone novels

#### *An Arrow's Flight (1998)*

#### G M

In this novel, ostensibly a modernised retelling of the Trojan war but really a gay AIDS polemic, Merlis establishes himself early on as a gay male narrator, and addresses a presumed gay male reader directly from time to time throughout, frequently evoking common gay experiences.

Neoptolemus, also known as Pyrrhus, the son of Achilles, comes to the city (unnamed but identifiable as New York) as a young nihilistic gay man and becomes a stripper and prostitute. When summoned by Odysseus to the Trojan War, he instead only travels as far as Lemnos, where Philoctetes bears the bow prophesied to end the war.

The hand of AIDS lies heavily on this novel, with asides throughout the text indicating how things have changed since the 'age of heroes' described: this age is later identified as the subculture of gay sexual liberation of the 1970s. Philoctetes' mythic illness from a serpent's bite is AIDS, seen as a punishment from the gods due to his sexuality and possible breaches of natural law.

In a pivotal scene, Philoctetes is dying in hospital and the narrator suggests that the narrative might draw from with the mythic tradition and offer Philoctetes a divine cure for his ailment in exchange for joining the war against Troy, using a *deus ex machina* to provide a solution. Merlis then cruelly rejects this option, acknowledging that the dead are better served by a realist representation. At the novel's climax, Philoctetes makes an impassioned speech to Odysseus about the desire of gay men to be accepted and the pressures on effeminate men to live up to society's standard of masculinity, and why this culture must be rejected: he then snaps the bow, breaking the thread of prophecy and changing the course of history so Troy never falls.

Chronicling the pain and despair of a particular historical moment, Merlis's work also explores the sea-change in gay culture post-AIDS, the feeling of queer liberation that had been lost, and the duty of those who were there to remember and to represent.

Rejecting a standard fantasy pattern in favour of tapping into the power of myth, he uses the lens of fantasy to inscribe a truer queer history.

### **Notes and related works**

*An Arrow's Flight* was published in the UK as *Pyrrhus*.

# Monette, Paul

## Standalone novels

### *Sanctuary* (1997)

L Q F

In this animal fantasy, a society of animals survives an unspecified apocalypse in an enchanted wood. When the Owl attempts to take control by encouraging division and persecution of the different, two female animals who are in love take the brunt of it. The couple, Reynardo and Lupine, are unusual not only because they are both female but because one is a fox and one a rabbit: they are treated as having breached natural law in multiple ways. Explicitly written as a gay and lesbian fable, Monette's work bluntly portrays the Owl's need to create (through labelling) and *then* suppress difference in order to establish a power structure.

The witch who enchanted the forest is a fascinating character, calmly transgressing the boundaries of sex and gender and ultimately teaching her lover to do so as well. She embodies the queer, seeking an Other outside herself while remaining in a state of flux: her return to life at the end of the novel echoes a desired queer indestructibility. Her almost offhand blessing of the animals' union and their freedom in it, and the assertion that the forest will be unspoiled and enchanted forever, mark *Sanctuary's* enactment of its title, creating a protected queer mythic space.

## Notes and related works

While *Sanctuary* stands and was interpreted on its own merits, Monette's work as an AIDS activist and author of nonfiction such as *Borrowed Time* (1988), a memoir of his experience with AIDS, suggests a darker and more painful context to the novel; Monette's death from AIDS two years before the novel's publication adds additional poignancy to the textual interpretation.

## Patton, Fiona

### Series – The Branion Realm

In a setting loosely based on English and Scottish history, the rulers (Aristoks) of the kingdom of Branion have a pact with an elemental power, the Living Flame, that grants them charisma and authority but also often drives them mad. Patton's series is written in reverse chronological order, following different characters linked to the royal family at pivotal historical moments shaped by political and religious conflict. Same-sex relationships are common in Branion, and there is a powerful Guild of Companions that provides long-term same-sex courtesans for royalty and nobility. Almost all characters appear to be bisexual, and there is systematic gender equality. In this way, Patton, writing backwards in time, inscribes an alternative queer history for an entire world.

#### *The Stone Prince (1997)*

#### G B M

Demnor, Branion's Crown Prince, struggles with his controlling and abusive mother, the Aristok, to be allowed to take Kalahnus, a young man with whom he falls in love, as his Companion. Told partly through flashback, this device allows Patton to show a mature relationship of eight years' standing (when Demnor is about to take the throne) as well as to explore the circumstances that brought both characters together.

The portrayal of primary characters as being in a long-term relationship (as opposed to romancing one another and beginning one) is unusual, and the affection and understanding between the characters is evident. In many ways, *The Stone Prince* deconstructs the idealisation of passionate young love: when younger, Demnor started a civil war over Kalahnus, leading to significant death and bloodshed; as more mature people, they deal with the quieter issues of Demnor's eventual need to marry and how that will impact their relationship. Kalahnus' final speech to Demnor is particularly significant, where he declares that he's tired of conflicting loyalties and complications and that all he wants is a happy ending: this statement echoes beyond the text, suggesting a great lack in the literature as well as a need on the (imagined) reader's part also. Patton's unusual

pattern in writing this series may also be explained by a refusal to move past this happy ending chronologically.

### ***The Painter Knight (1998)***

**G B M R**

Set a century before *The Stone Prince*, this novel follows Simon, a painter who attempts to rescue the murdered Aristok's daughter from a political coup. Simon and the Aristok, Leary, are lovers, and he is haunted by Leary's ghost in his old age as he tells the story: Patton's backward-forward attitude to chronology recurs. Simon's relationship with the insane Leary was clearly destructive, and the inability of both of them to let go is made clear by Leary's haunting Simon fifty years later. However, Simon's death and reunification with Leary at the end of the text implies an ultimately positive and peaceful state for them both. Simon and Leary, like most characters in the setting, are functionally bisexual, and Simon fathered a child at the request of a female friend.

Another primary character, Rosarion, a mystic who accidentally betrayed Leary, falls in love with a man. The two of them extend their relationship to a third man, and this is not portrayed as especially unusual. Rosarion, being a queer mystic dying of a chronic illness, fits a number of stereotypes but is portrayed sensitively; there is no hint his illness is intended to represent AIDS.

### ***The Granite Shield (1999)***

**L G B M R**

Taking place generations before *The Painter Knight*, this novel of political intrigue focuses on the cultural and religious divisions in the setting and the overthrow of an Aristok of one religion for another. With a wide array of characters, and spanning a twenty-year period, this novel, like the others in the series, is mostly notable for its unselfconscious portrayal of queer integration. Several characters on both sides are in same-sex relationships. One of the more prominent characters, Llewen, has an understanding with a female friend of his, but also seduces and falls in love with a man: ultimately the three of them form a partnership. Llewen, a seer, ends the novel by seeing what is to come for the land:



effectively the plot of the previous books, neatly closing the circle of Patton's chronology.

### **Notes and related works**

The fourth novel in the 'Branion Realm' series, *The Golden Sword* (2001), lies outside the time period of the research.

## **Pinto, Ricardo**

### **Series – Stone Dance of the Chameleon**

This series is set in a fantastical society with an extremely strict caste system: notably, it is forbidden to see the face of a higher-rank person. The Masters of this society set themselves apart from others in every possible way: masks, breeding, skin tone, and literal distance above the ground. This system, unsurprisingly, fosters isolation and disconnection. Due to the focus on blood purity, high-ranking women are kept in seclusion and both same-sex contact (among men) and incest (both homosexual and heterosexual) are common. Considering this society is based on taboo and strict regulation of behaviour, the lack of any bar on homosexuality is an interesting and perhaps deliberate omission, although it parallels many historical societies.

Also, Pinto's series, although fantasy in style and tone, is without any magical elements: there are aspects believed to be magical by the characters, but that a modern reader would realise as being mundane. This suggests the series is as much an alternate ancient history as it is a fantasy.

### *The Chosen (1999)*

## **G M**

Carnelian, heir to a great lord and Master, is brought into the culture of the Masters having been raised outside it. Most of the book alternates between travelogue and anthropological commentary on Pinto's created society as Carnelian and his father come to the Masters' city. Carnelian's half-brother, Tain, is a slave serving their family, and his manipulation, mistreatment, and rape by other Masters sheds light on the darker aspects of Carnelian's world.

Carnelian falls in love with a strange boy, Osidian, but their brief romance is shattered when it is revealed Osidian is to become Emperor, and would then outrank Carnelian and everyone else, barring him from meaningful contact: the Masters worship twin male gods and it is believed the Emperor achieves apotheosis on coronation and embodies them. Their relationship is primarily erotic and sensual, with overtones of

romantic obsession, and their innocence (such as it is) contrasts heavily and deliberately with their surroundings.

### **Novels and related works**

The later novels of Pinto's series – *The Standing Dead* (2002) and *The Third God* (2009) – fell outside the research time period.

## Pollack, Rachel

### Series – Unquenchable Fire

#### *Temporary Agency (1994)*

#### L F

Set in the same near future as Pollack's 1988 novel *Unquenchable Fire*, this novel presents a world in which a mystical revolution has entirely overthrown both society and the technological paradigm. Spirituality, magic, and storytelling are now very literally the dominant forces of the world.

Ellen, the main character, lost her cousin Paul to a Malignant One (demon) when she was a young girl, and a famous female lawyer helped her crusade against the government cover-up that resulted. Reunited with that lawyer, Alison Birkett, over a decade later, Ellen (now out as a lesbian) comes to terms with her youthful crush on and unresolved feelings for Alison as the two of them investigate a similar incident. Very much a novel of desire, Pollack's work explores Ellen's inchoate attraction to Alison as a teenager and contrasts it with her mature and informed desire for her as an adult. The fact that Alison was aware of Ellen's crush and, while not encouraging it, was flattered by it is also addressed: Ellen's fear is that she was deliberately groomed in some way. Both of them move very carefully around one another while managing to be entirely honest about their feelings: a deft piece of maneuvering on Pollack's part. Ellen's own difficult history of coming out is part of her story also, although this future has a fair amount of queer visibility, with lesbian separatist communities and cross-gendered computer hackers.

The demon-turned-angel's agenda of bringing ultimate sexual fulfilment (to the accidental destruction of those involved) allows Pollack to expound her thesis that humans, although flawed, can only find fulfilment in one another. Very much a ritualistic space in itself, the novel devotes a great deal of space to the ritual enacted between Ellen and Alison to seal their love. The horror of Pollack's setting is that the fantastical has become utterly and completely normalised, to the degree that most people living in a world of signs and miracles neither notice nor care: the queer characters circumvent this, acknowledging and embracing the fantastic to bring about resolution.

## Standalone novels

### *Godmother Night (1996)*

#### L F

Rewriting the fable of the boy who had Death for a godfather in modern America, Pollack's novel follows a lesbian couple who ask Mother Night – Death, represented as a woman – to be their daughter's godmother, and what follows. Pollack spends some time early in the novel discussing lesbianism and the lesbian rights movement, and both mothers – Jaque and Laurie – were politically active. Their relationships with their families are also explored: Jaque's parents disapprove of her lesbianism; Laurie is a rape survivor by her father, who also attempts to rape Jaque.

Pollack's work strikes an interesting balance between fantasy and realism. Mother Night gives Jaque and Laurie a ritual to conceive a child together, but they still require a male sperm donor. Their daughter Kate receives the same magical ability to send away death as in the folktale, and establishes herself as a spiritual healer. Even her relationship with her godmother reveals this tension: whenever Kate's godmother attempts to involve herself with Kate or give her gifts, it impedes Kate's ability to relate to the real world, or her living mother, or her own female lover.

With a consistent theme of choosing life over death (the representation of death as not only a woman but as a mother figure is highly unusual, but echoes a child's separation from their mother), and subtle feminist elements intermingled with the overt ones (a recurring theme is a girl burying her brother's bones), *Godmother Night* is as much a feminist fantasy as a lesbian one, perhaps more.

#### Notes and related works

Pollack's *Unquenchable Fire* (1988), set in the same world as *Temporary Agency*, has no primary LGBT characters and was thus excluded from the research.

## **Rivers, Diana**

### **Series – The Hadra Archives**

This series chronicles various stories that are presented as part of the mythology of the Hadra, a society of Goddess-worshipping pacifist lesbian women with psychic/magical powers that include mind-reading and invulnerability to assault. A strong theme, at least in the early books, is the oppression of the Hadra and their predecessors on account of both their magical gifts and the fact that they are women-loving women. These novels are feminist separatist fantasies as much as they are lesbian: there is a strong association of men with violence and oppression. The series has a very heavy emphasis on female space and representing women's lives, emotions, and relationships, often in great detail.

#### *Journey to Zelindar (1987)*

**L F**

Sair, a woman who was raped and cast out by a patriarchal city-state, flees into Hadra lands and is taken into their society. This novel introduces the Hadra and their culture: Sair, being from a society where lesbianism is both a common insult and punishable by death, finds the concept difficult to accept. Supporting the Hadra against her city's ruler, Sair also has tumultuous personal relationships and several different lovers: there is an equal focus on dramatic scenes and interpersonal discussion.

The Hadra powers are noted to make them different from other human beings: they only give birth to daughters, and a Hadra who lives among men begins to lose her abilities, implying that the resonance of gender is integral to these powers. The novel contradicts itself as to whether they can be trained or only acquired after several generations: ultimately, though, it upholds a theme of queer separation.

#### *Daughters of the Great Star (1992)*

**L F**

Set long before *Journey to Zelindar*, before the establishment of the Hadra, the novel follows Tazzi, a young girl with magical abilities. When she is driven out by a mob, she learns other girls born at the same time as her have the same abilities, and they band together for mutual protection. Tazzi's feeling alone and finding a supportive community of people like herself is a direct parallel to many gay experiences, as of course is her persecution and exile. Tazzi's difficult personal relationships are similar to Sair's, and the effect her trauma has had on her is realistically depicted. This novel also introduces a secret order of Witches, who mentor the girls who will become the Hadra but whose powers are passing from the world and being supplanted by the Hadra.

This novel, even more so than *Journey to Zelindar*, is heavily 'normal' and domestic: most of its scenes involve characters discussing emotions, relationships, and the everyday details of life. It reads as a deliberate effort on the author's part to contribute both to women's writing and the normalisation of lesbian characters and relationships, perhaps catering to a perceived lack in the literature.

### *The Hadra (1995)*

#### **L F**

Tazzi (now using the name Tazzil) and the Hadra help to liberate a city and establish their own homeland. There is a continued strong emphasis on relationships and day-to-day life, with Tazzil finding a long-term lover who asks her for monogamy. The Witches pass on, after explaining to Tazzil that the reason the Hadra are hated and feared is because they literally cannot be physically oppressed due to their powers, and therefore they are a challenge to anyone who seeks power and control: the nature of Hadra powers is said to be in absolute truth, suggesting self-honesty and openness is integral to healthy lesbian self-identity and relationships.

#### **Notes and related works**

Rivers has published many more Hadra novels (a total of seven to date, with the most recent published in 2012): however, all novels published after *The Hadra* lie outside the time period of the research.

## **Rivkin, J. F.**

### **Series – Silverglass**

Nyctasia, a sorceress, and Corson, a mercenary, have various adventures travelling together as friends and sometime lovers, both ultimately ascending to positions of power. Although there are some attempts at overarching plot and an occasional adventure, the focus is primarily on the characters' various relationships: the series is best described as sedate sword-and-sorcery with a style of 'female writing' to it.

#### ***Web of Wind (1987)***

##### **L B F**

Staying with distant relatives of Nyctasia's, the two adventurers almost incidentally discover and defeat a cult in an ancient temple. It is clear both Nyctasia and Corson are bisexual: Corson has a regular male lover at home, and Nyctasia fondly remembers a past male lover. When asked if the two of them are lovers, they dodge the question, though it is later hinted that they are. Nyctasia sleeps with a female cousin of hers, and Corson with a male: the teasing they receive and the general conversation within the family suggests a setting without any taboo surrounding homosexuality.

#### ***Witch of Rhostshyl (1989)***

##### **L B F**

Following directly on from *Web of Wind*, Corson returns home to her regular partner Steifann, while Nyctasia deals with the mysterious return of a former lover, Ben. Reflecting on both Steifann and Nyctasia as lovers (confirming their relationship), Corson admits she appreciates both Steifann's stability and Nyctasia's adventure, and enjoys being able to alternate time with both of them: she and Steifann are open to the other taking lovers in their absence. Nyctasia and Steifann argue over Corson until she smooths it over. Later in the novel, she and Nyctasia have sex, which (possibly excepting *Silverglass*) is the



first time this has been portrayed directly, as opposed to being alluded to. By the end of the novel, Nyctasia is ruling her birth city-state and elevates Corson to the nobility.

### *Mistress of Ambiguities (1991)*

#### **L G B F**

Again, this follows *Witch of Rhostshyl* directly. Corson's relationship with Steifann is discussed in more detail, and he is portrayed as a guiding influence and stability to her self-destructive tendencies. A newer character, Trask, who serves at Steifann's inn, sleeps with a scholar at Nyctasia's court in exchange for a basic education: it is unclear whether Trask's interest is primarily in men or whether this is simply business. Nyctasia's former lover Ben involves himself in dark magic a second time and leaves to pursue it, and the novel ends with Nyctasia's niece and nephew being born as her heirs: she sacrificed the ability to have children in exchange for sorcery. The series, comes to a rather unsatisfying end at this point, and was clearly intended to continue in a later novel: however, it never did. That being said, the characters' complex relationships and domesticities are far more important to this series than any of its plot elements.

#### **Notes and related works**

The first novel in the series, *Silverglass* (1986), was published outside the time period of the research.

The later titles in the 'Silverglass' series are often incorrectly given with 'Silverglass' as a prefix, e.g. *Silverglass: Web of Wind*. This may be due to the fact that the front covers have the word 'Silverglass' inset behind the title. The copyright pages, however, omit the 'Silverglass' prefix and it is not part of the books' actual titles.

According to the author's notes in *Mistress of Ambiguities*, J. F. Rivkin is a pseudonym:

J.F. Rivkin is the shared pseudonym of two writers who live on opposite sides of the country. They coauthored the first two books of the Silverglass series, *Silverglass* and *Web of Wind*. The next two volumes, *Witch of Rhostshyl* and *Mistress of*

Ambiguities, were written by the east coast J.F. Rivkin, while the west coast J.F. is the author of the third volume of the Runesword series, *The Dreamstone*, and is currently writing two books on time travel and dinosaurs. (Rivkin, 1991, p.204)

These authors' identities remain generally unknown as of 2015,<sup>9</sup> and it is the wish of the authors that they remain so.<sup>10</sup>

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<sup>9</sup> The online version of Clute & Grant's (1997) *Encyclopedia of Fantasy* lists 'J F Rivkin' as 'Joint pseudonym of two unidentified authors'. Retrieved from [http://sf-encyclopedia.uk/fe.php?nm=rivkin\\_j\\_f](http://sf-encyclopedia.uk/fe.php?nm=rivkin_j_f) on 22 August 2015.

<sup>10</sup> Personal correspondence with the researcher, August 2015.

## Roessner, Michaela

### Series – Stars

This quiet historical fantasy set in 16<sup>th</sup> century Florence follows Tommaso, a cook's apprentice, through his service to a young Catherine de Medici and his relationship with the artist Michelangelo. Delightfully mundane, the political and magical intrigue is subordinate to a showcase of the details of sixteenth-century life and discourses on food and the art of cooking.

Tommaso's age, though perhaps culturally and historically unremarkable, is awkward for a modern reader: he first comes to Michelangelo's attention at the age of eleven, and they become lovers when Tommaso is thirteen. The extent of Michelangelo's obsession with Tommaso before this, even if read as artistic inspiration, is uncomfortable. Tommaso's own attraction to young boys when he grows older is likewise presented as normal and natural.

As a historical fantasy, this series is particularly interesting for the conceit that Katerina (Catherine de Medici) is a nexus point across multiple worlds and histories: at one point Tommaso notes that other people seem to see and describe her very differently to how he sees her, and wonders if she can shift her shape. While on one level this is a nod to the inaccuracies of the historical record, on another it suggests that the Katerina Tommaso knows might not be the same as the Catherine from accepted history. This interpretation distances Tommaso as a character from the real (he is not being written as a 'true' historical character) but would paradoxically also give his relationship with Michelangelo more legitimacy: although it did not happen historically, the frame of the novel allows for it to have happened in the historical record of an alternate fantastic past, which in a way makes it more than purely an invention of the author's.

### *The Stars Dispose (1997)*

G B M

Tommaso's family weather a number of troubles including politics and plague, and he is apprenticed as both a cook and a sculptor. Over the course of a number of years, Tommaso

comes to the attention of Michelangelo and they ultimately become lovers. The cultural context of such relationships is explored, as is the need for discretion in public. In particular, Tommaso fears Michelangelo will tire of him and Michelangelo knows Tommaso will eventually move on from him: both characters are shown to be attracted to women and men, and Michelangelo discusses the benefit of a romantic relationship with a young man who can understand that art will always come first. Their relationship is both emotional and sexual, and tenderly portrayed. The common (if unspoken) nature of such relationships is also hinted at by Tommaso's lack of adverse reaction to such an idea: it is presented as very natural, despite being officially disapproved of.

There is a subplot involving the persistence of traditional Goddess worship along the female line of Tommaso's family, and quiet kitchen magic, all of which contributes to an atmosphere that is simultaneously homely and fantastical.

### *The Stars Compel (1999)*

#### **G B M**

Moving to Rome as part of Katerina's entourage, Tommaso, now aged fifteen, assists in protecting her from and assisting her in intrigue while continuing his relationship with Michelangelo. At one point, Tommaso sees a young boy of twelve or thirteen that he finds particularly attractive, showing that his role in these man/boy relationships is shifting as he grows older: he is also attracted to one of Katerina's ladies-in-waiting, reinforcing a bisexual (in modern terms) orientation. Michelangelo's growing love for a younger boy while they are apart greatly upsets Tommaso, until eventually Michelangelo asks Tommaso's permission to end their relationship due to their physical separation.

Although the implication of the title is that fate cannot permit Katerina to marry her cousin Ippolito (the focus of much of the intrigue), the novel strongly implies that it as much or more refers to Tommaso's and Michelangelo's inability to be together: they are literal star-crossed lovers. Tommaso's role in the magic that permeates the novel is also worthy of note, as he is a queer character with a magical role that is entirely unrelated to his queer identity: in fact, it's due to his descent (through illegitimacy) from an astrologer.

## **Scott, Melissa & Barnett, Lisa**

### **Series – Astreiant**

Set in a Renaissance-esque city where astrology is dominant in people's lives, being both a powerful cultural force and the basis of magic. In Astreiant publicly established but privately-paid 'pointsmen' investigate crimes: this series follows Raith, a pointsman, and Eslingen, a soldier, through investigations and an eventual romance.

#### *Point of Hopes (1995)*

#### **G B**

Rath is asked to find a runaway apprentice girl, and uncovers a conspiracy kidnapping children for their astrological benefits. The apprentice had a female lover, and it's noted that this is tolerated by the guilds although disapproved of, as it means apprentices are less likely to become pregnant. The gender-equal nature of the society is also evident: there is a concept of 'masculine' and 'feminine' stars (which among other things tend to determine profession), but these are not restricted to men and women, just associated with them. Eslingen, also a viewpoint character, is clearly bisexual, and received a commission in the military due to the interest of an older man. There are hints that Rath finds Eslingen attractive, and that he is envious of women who desire Eslingen, but their relationship begins in later books in the series.

### **Standalone novels**

#### *The Armor of Light (1999)*

#### **G**

In an alternate English history where both Christopher Marlowe and Sir Philip Sidney survived their historical deaths and in which contemporary beliefs about magic were based in fact, Sir Philip (a white magician) and Marlowe (a demonologist) investigate King

James of Scotland's persecution by witches. Marlowe's primary orientation toward men is understood, although not approved of, and James's tastes run similarly, in both cases matching the historical record.

Within the context of the setting, Marlowe comes across as a modern gay character might. He deals with his landlady's disapproval, obsesses about his former lover 'Ganymede' (who is given occasional perspectives), recalls a history of experimentation in his youth, and makes it clear his interest is in men, not boys. His haunting by the literal Mephistophilis from *Doctor Faustus* has a constant sexual edge to it, made sharper by Marlowe's own belief that he is damned due to his sexual desires (and practices). Despite being a somewhat tortured character, Marlowe is not a celibate one: an incidental liaison at one point demonstrates this effectively. However, his (perhaps unrequited) love for his Ganymede is enough to resist Mephistophilis' sexual temptations: even the staid Puritan Sir Philip admits that Marlowe's loves are surely a lesser sin than meddling with demons.

The portrayal of Marlowe is in many ways an effort to historicise gay representation. The speech he writes on behalf of the discordant stars for Sir Philip's ritual, arguing in favour of disruptive influences and their benefits to order and just rule, reads as a clear defence of the queer and its interrogative and disruptive potential. The authors' final note that the events of the novel are true, despite having not happened, only strengthens the reading of this novel as an attempt to add to an LGBT historical canon through the medium of fantasy.

### **Notes and related works**

Later novels in the 'Astreiant' series, where the relationship between the two lead characters develops, fall outside the time period of the research.

## Sherman, Delia

### Standalone novels

#### *Through a Brazen Mirror (1989)*

#### G R

A retelling of the folk ballad ‘The Famous Flower of Servingmen’, Sherman’s novel twists the traditional story of the king who falls in love with his male servant, who turns out to be a woman in disguise. Two major changes to the narrative result: Elinor, posing as William Flower, has no interest in love or romance, as she is mourning her husband’s murder; the king, Lionel, realises he loves the persona of William rather than the woman Elinor, and must accept his homosexuality as a result.

Elinor herself is merely the catalyst: Lionel’s difficulties with his sexuality are central to the text. In a fantastical setting where Christianity is nonetheless the norm, he must accept how his identity would be regarded by others and make the hard choice to do what is necessary for his kingdom: in other words, to suppress it and make a political marriage. Sherman’s approach, while bitter, avoids cynicism. In many ways it simply portrays the reality of a past where other options were unavailable and a cultural and religious background of oppression was unavoidable. Lionel’s sexuality is also not derived from nothing for dramatic effect: the text takes pains to include other elements to support a homosexual identity, including a passionate friendship of his youth that verged on the homoerotic. Adding to the novel’s bitter tone, he accepts that if he had ever expressed a sexual love for his (now dead) friend he would have been rejected and hated. His ultimate conclusion, that he and Elinor both love ghosts and there may be no sin in that, is a dark and unhappy resolution, and a credible one.

### Notes and related works

Sherman’s fantasy *The Porcelain Dove* (1993) was excluded from the research due to its lack of LGBT characters.

The author’s full name is Cordelia Sherman, and she is listed as such on copyright pages,

but she uses Delia Sherman professionally: that has therefore been the name used.



## Singleton, Jacqui

### Standalone novels

#### *Heartstone & Saber (1994)*

L Q F

Elayna, a healer and sorceress, develops a relationship with the local queen, Cydell, in this strange and poorly-written novel. Despite its being ostensibly a fantasy novel, the author devotes a page to placing the world in a science-fictional context, informing the reader that all other planets in the solar system have warp drive: this information is both irrelevant and never mentioned again. Also, although both men and women exist in this world, women can both sire and bear children: how or why this works is never addressed, and it may simply be to serve the narrative by allowing Cydell to take Elayna as a consort while still having an heir. The setting is described as one where the gender of one's partner is irrelevant, so long as heirs are produced where necessary. Both Elayna and Cydell are consistently portrayed as lesbian from the beginning: Cydell is reluctant to express not her sexuality but her emotions. Although labelled as young adult fiction, the sex scenes in the book are upfront and explicit.

## **Stirling, Stephen & Meier, Shirley**

### **Series – Fifth Millennium**

This series set in a fantasy milieu on a far-future Earth is difficult to assess as a whole, as it shifts between characters and time periods and occasionally changes authorship. The setting is a gritty and dark one, with frequent reference to harsh violence, slavery, and rape, and there is evidence of strong feminist undertones.

#### *The Cage (1989)*

#### **L B F R**

Megan Whitlock, a halfling trader with a troubled past, and Shkai'ra, a female barbarian warrior, recover their allies and hunt down the person who betrayed Megan. Megan and Shkai'ra are lovers, and their relationship is a complex one: despite being very harsh and brutal individuals, they are tender with one another, and Megan's overwhelming drive for revenge takes a toll on their intimacy. Megan's history of rape and slavery is also an impediment to trusting a lover, particularly a male one, and this is treated sensitively. Over the course of the novel, although Shkai'ra remains her primary partner, Megan reconnects with a male friend for whom she has feelings, and various love triangles develop: Megan overcoming her fear of men is a major plot element. However, there is no implication that her relationship with Shkai'ra or her attraction with women was rooted in a fear of men: rather, her character reads as a bisexual woman who consciously prefers relationships with women due to these fears. Ultimately these complications and romances are resolved through a four-person group marriage after Megan prioritises her lovers over her revenge.

The world presented appears to be one in which the gender of one's partner is mostly socially irrelevant, but it is later made clear that prejudice does exist, just not in the home cultures of either main character. Sex is both portrayed and discussed in an upfront manner, and the characters are open about their feelings and desires throughout.

### **Notes and related works**

Of the seven books in the Fifth Millennium series (most by Stirling & Meier; two later books are written by Karen Wehrstein), *The Cage* was the only one included in the research. The others fall outside the time period and/or do not have primary LGBT characters; except for *Shadow's Son* (1991), the only potential text this research overlooked and thus failed to include (as referenced in the second chapter).

## Tarr, Judith

### Series – Avaryan Rising

Covering multiple generations, this series tells the story of a man, Mirain the Sunborn, who ascends to become a living god, his descendants, and the power relations between his kingdom and the neighbouring Empire.

#### *A Fall of Princes (1988)*

G B T Q M R

Hirel, a prince of the Empire, flees his brothers' assassins and meets Sarevan, Mirain's son. As they travel together the sexual tension between them grows, despite Sarevan's clear heterosexuality; Hirel, as is customary in the Empire, is functionally bisexual. Their developing relationship is a confused one: Sarevan takes almost an older-brother protective role toward the younger Hirel, but is uncomfortable with his growing attraction to him, not out of a discomfort with homosexuality but due to the simple fact that despite falling in love with Hirel his object-choice remains heterosexual: Sarevan's religious vow of chastity also complicates matters. This avoids the stereotype of a character having one single exception to their sexual orientation or deciding their partner's gender is irrelevant. Ultimately this tension is resolved by Sarevan undergoing a magical transformation that changes his sex to female so that she and Hirel can make a political marriage. Her sexual orientation also changes to be attracted to men.

Using the name/title Savayin ('Twice-Born') and female pronouns, she weathers political difficulty and social disapproval from a patriarchal society, as well as Hirel's ingrained patriarchal stereotypes, to assert her equality with him and force an equal and open political marriage between them. Although not a transgender character in one sense (in that Sarevan's personal identity was always male, and his change of sex and gender was therefore highly traumatic), Savayin can be read within a context of transgender representation: incidents such as characters being afraid of using Savayin's old name and accidentally upsetting her reinforce this reading.

The text is full of queer resonance and intriguing minor elements: Hirel and

Sarevan admitting the truth of their feelings while in the mystical and liminal space of the Shadowlands; there is a cultural ideal in Sarevan's country that sex between men is play while sex with women is serious and sacred; virginity in adults is taboo in Hirel's Empire; even the fact that despite Hirel's girlishness and lack of masculinity being commented on repeatedly, it is the fully confident and masculine Sarevan who must change his sex.

### *Arrows of the Sun (1993)*

#### **G B M**

Set generations after *A Fall of Princes*, with both kingdoms now under a single ruler named Estarion, a descendant of Hirel and Savayin. Korusan, a young man with a curse that will kill him by the age of twenty, infiltrates Estarion's guard to assassinate him, but falls obsessively in love with him instead. Despite Estarion's established heterosexuality, he falls in love with Korusan and they become lovers. Here we have a more 'straight' example of the trend of a single exception to a character's sexuality: Estarion considers Korusan this exception, and admits he is not attracted to other boys / young men. That being said, he is sexually attracted to Korusan and appreciates the eroticism and sexuality of their relationship, which is directly presented.

Their romance ends in tragedy: Korusan slips into madness, knowing Estarion cannot love him with the same obsessive intensity as Korusan does (at this point Estarion is in love with four separate people, including Korusan, whom he prioritises). Not wanting Estarion to outlive him, Korusan attempts to awaken the mad sleeping god Mirain, forcing Estarion to kill him.

This novel also brings Savayin's story to an end, as she recurs as a minor character: unable to die due to the magic worked upon her, she was forced to witness Hirel's death from old age. After mentoring Estarion in disguise, she destroys herself to force Mirain, her father, back to his magical sleep. Although tragic, this ending – unlike Estarion's – was what she wanted. A certain inevitability of queer tragedy seems evident.

#### **Notes and related works**

The first two novels of the 'Avaryan Rising' series were excluded from the research, as follows:

*The Hall of the Mountain King (1986)* – Outside research time period.

*The Lady of Han-Gilen (1987)* – No primary LGBT characters.

## **Weis, Margaret & Hickman, Tracy**

### **Series – Rose of the Prophet**

In a world with many gods and a complicated cosmology, Mathew, a gay wizard from another continent, and Khardan and Zhora, two betrothed members of warring desert tribes, attempt to restore balance to the world. The cosmology of this world and the nature of its deities are rooted in archetypal oppositions: Good and Evil neutralise one another, leading to an imbalance in Heaven. With this in mind, Mathew, a queer character from the other side of the world, is out of context in multiple ways: his home, his beliefs, his sexuality, and his use of magic (all magic-users on this continent are female) all contradict the accepted way of things and give other characters the opportunity to review their perspectives.

Among other things, Mathew's sexuality draws attention to a contradiction which is never adequately resolved in the series: the tribespeople claim that freedom is their gift from their god, Akhran, and value that quality above all else. However, Akhran apparently has an edict against homosexuality, which would be strange for a god who prioritised the concept of freedom. Possibly this is due to parallels with the generally Islamic portrayal of Akhran's worship taking precedence over the deity's actual attributes in the text. In contrast, Mathew's deity Promenthos is an exact parallel to the Judeo-Christian god in appearance and style but has no restrictions on sexuality or relationships. Khardan's claim to Mathew late in the series that Akhran does not forbid love freely offered is in direct contradiction to the established tribal doctrine: either he is lying to spare Mathew's feelings or Weis and Hickman are implying that this aspect of the god's worship is in opposition to his true nature. Since Akhran is a character in the series and never comments on this topic, his silence suggests Weis and Hickman were unaware of the contradictions implicit in their text.

### *The Will of the Wanderer (1988)*

## **G M**

Mathew arrives to the continent as part of a diplomatic convoy with his lover, said lover

(and everyone else) being conveniently murdered soon after; Mathew himself is mistaken for a woman and enslaved. This neatly establishes that Mathew's culture has no taboo against homosexuality and that he is feminine in appearance. In many ways Mathew is an unfortunate stereotype, at least upon introduction. Mathew's people are known for their beauty, androgyny, lack of facial hair, and high-pitched voices; he is described as sensitive, innocent, and naïve.

The desert tribes, on the other hand, have rigidly defined gender roles and laws against both cross-dressing and homosexuality. In order to avoid executing him when his gender is discovered, Khardan convinces Mathew to plead to insanity and to agree to be legally classed as a woman instead of a man: in this patriarchal culture, it is assumed no sane man would agree to this. Khardan's subsequent legal 'marriage' to Mathew to protect him adds to the complications of their relationship, and Zhora and Mathew's later forced kidnapping of Khardan in women's clothes to save his life reverses this neatly. Although Mathew's trauma at the loss of his lover is not glossed over, he becomes devoted to Khardan as his sole protector.

### *The Paladin of the Night (1989)*

#### **G**

Mathew continues to read as an effeminate stereotype in this novel: however, his actions and character development throughout give him far more individual agency. He has a number of internal battles around temptation toward the use of black magic and personal crises of faith due to feelings of abandonment by his god. Although these are essential to his growth as a character, these journeys and transitions have nothing whatsoever to do with Mathew's sexuality, which is unusual for a novel published at the time. It does become clear, though, that Mathew has gradually fallen in love with Khardan.

### *The Prophet of Akhran (1989)*

#### **G B**

Mathew's feelings for Khardan cause him significant distress in this novel, because the unambiguously straight Khardan can't possibly return them and Mathew fears that



Khardan will hate and despise him if he learns of Mathew's feelings. When he confesses his love near the end of the novel, Khardan's response, while not reciprocating, is kind. He admits he values Mathew's love and regard, and does not hate him: while he cannot return Mathew's feelings the way he wants, he considers Mathew a wise counsellor and friend. There are hints that Mathew had some feelings for Zhora at one point in the novel, and she for him, but these are not pursued other than to note that Khardan can relate to Mathew as a man and Zhora to him as a woman. Although this reinforces Mathew's queer role in the text, it also conflates sexuality and gender in ways that are difficult to unpick.

Mathew's final position as a chaste queer character with unconsummated desire is a complex one. His deity's advice to him is to give Khardan and Zhora to one another (in other words, not to stand in their way as a couple); his (female) guardian angel finds herself in a similar position, with her (male) love imprisoned forever. The final scene of the novel, with Mathew holding the titular flower – the Rose of the Prophet – with an angel's tear falling on his cheek, seems to focus on the pathos and tragic potential of a gay character in unfortunate ways. Similarly, although Mathew's presence has effected change on individual levels, his overall role is ultimately to restore the status quo: the gods of Good and Evil are restored to their binary balance, and Khardan and Zhora deliberately throw Ahkran's tribespeople back into feuding to prevent their unification and a holy crusade. Imprisoned by his assigned role, Mathew can only oversee the queer tension inherent in these patterns rather than becoming directly involved in them himself, and therein lies his tragedy.

## Williams, Karen

### Standalone novels

#### *Love Spell (1992)*

L F

Kate, a character in modern America, meets a green-skinned woman on Halloween and has a romance, only later realising she was not in costume. Occasionally verging on magical realism, this novel is a beautiful examination of the nature of magic and fantasy: Kate's comments about her lover Allegra being 'out of context' address this directly. Kate's wider circle of lesbian friends contribute to discussions of sexual orientation, religion, and family acceptance. The witch Allegra's queer nature is indivisible: she is both sexually queer and magically queer, and can neither change her appearance nor fit in with society. A joking reference to her as a 'woman of color' underscores this marginalisation.

#### *Nightshade (1996)*

L F

Alex, a contemporary American woman, receives a magical bell that summons a fairy, Orielle. As she falls in love with Orielle, they also work to destroy the sorceress who bound her. As in *Love Spell*, the interface of the mundane and the magical is of central importance, although the novels are unrelated: Alex's difficult past and inability to form emotional ties with her lovers is just as significant as Orielle's occult history. The power relation between them, inherently unequal due to the bell, is a source of tension; however, Orielle is upfront about what she wants and has her own agency. According to Orielle same-sex relationships are common for fairies, as is love at first sight.

The final scene, where Alex uses the hidden fairy Fountain of Youth to restore her dying older companions, is of particular note. Orielle claims it's against nature to do so, and Alex retorts that nature has been opposed to her for her entire life: a level of bitterness and anger that is as powerful as it is unexpected, and taps deeply into the queer potential

for change and difference.

### **Notes and related works**

The title of *Nightshade* is listed incorrectly in several sources as *Night Shade*.

# Winterson, Jeanette

## Standalone novels

### *The Passion (1987)*

#### L B

A historical novel with minor fantasy / magical realist elements, *The Passion* alternates between the viewpoint characters of Henri, a soldier and cook for Napoleon, and Villanelle, a Venetian gambler. Given the title, the nature of passion is central to the text: Henri's idolising Napoleon and Villanelle's romanticising gambling and love leads to tragedy for both of them. Villanelle is bisexual (and the erotic love of Henri's life) but her primary emotional and romantic relationships are always with women: one woman literally steals her heart and attempts to imprison her soul thereby.

Villanelle, already bisexual, is very demonstrably an Other: in addition to her sexuality, she has webbed feet that can walk on water (a secret of Venetian boatman families), never fits in anywhere except in Venice which she characterises as ever-changing and always hidden, and she frequently dresses as a man. More a frame than a story, the novel is primarily a device for Winterson's characters to express their perspectives on life and on passion.

## **Chapter Four – Representation and Trends in the Literature**

### *Overview*

Having catalogued the canon of the emergent genre of LGBT fantasy novels from 1987-2000 in the previous chapter, analysing them as individual texts, this chapter intends to focus on exploring the trends and patterns within the literature more generally, allowing a more general picture of the genre's shape and changes over the time period in question to emerge while also providing scope to follow trends across multiple texts.

With this in mind, after a brief discussion of the historical and cultural context within which the literature emerged, this chapter will examine the literature's representation of the various identities, relationships, and sexualities coded in the third chapter, with the intention of mapping the context of LGBT presence and depiction within which more specific trends are to be found. It will then present a detailed double case-study, working with two elements that are highly significant to the genre – coming out, and HIV/AIDS – exploring their various forms of representation in the literature as well as what functions they perform within the LGBT fantasy genre.

## *Historical and cultural context of the literature*

The literature uncovered by this thesis was written and published against a rapidly-shifting cultural background. LGBT rights, representation, and visibility in Western culture all evolved dramatically over the period 1987 to 2000; this was reflected in the media produced during the period, although not necessarily to the same degree across each medium and genre. While the focus of this research was primarily on uncovering and cataloguing the LGBT fantasy literature, as well as assessing its representational trends, it is both necessary and important to acknowledge the historical and cultural contexts within which this literature was written.

Looking to the beginning of the research period, the year 1987 was defined by the recent overpowering emergence of AIDS into the public consciousness: Neil Miller's *Out of the Past* (2006) titled its chapter on the 1980s 'The Age of AIDS', and the political action group ACT UP (the AIDS Coalition to Unleash Power) was formed in 1987. Prominent activists spoke about public health, discrimination against AIDS sufferers, and sexual attitudes within the gay community, bringing these issues and their associated narratives to the forefront of American culture. The impact of AIDS on the 1987-2000 fantasy literature, in fact, was so significant that a full section of this chapter is devoted to exploring it.

The dramas of AIDS, however, were themselves part of a wider context of public debate and discussion on homosexuality and its place in society that had begun long before 1987. As the United States Supreme Court put it in *Obergefell v. Hodges* (2015):

Well into the 20th century, many States condemned same-sex intimacy as immoral, and homosexuality was treated as an illness. Later in the century, cultural and political developments allowed same-sex couples to lead more open and public lives. Extensive public and private dialogue followed, along with shifts in public attitudes.  
(p.2)

Nor did these dialogues conclude by 1987, or indeed at any point during the research period. John Gallagher wrote in *The Advocate* that 'while there is demonstrable support for the belief that more and more people support gay rights, the vast majority of the population continues to view homosexuality as just plain wrong' (1992). In fact, various US state

‘sodomy laws’ that functionally prohibited homosexual sex acts persisted until 2003, and although public attitudes consistently shifted in favour of LGBT rights throughout the research period it remained a polarising and contested topic: ‘Outlaw to outcast may be a step forward, but it does not achieve the full promise of liberty.’ (*Obergefell v. Hodges*, p.14)

The 1980s was also the stage for what Miller titled ‘The Gay Fiction Boom of the 1980s’, which was reflected not only in literary or mainstream gay fiction but also genre works, including LGBT fantasy and science fiction: Levy (2009) noted that the late 1980s was when ‘things began changing’ in those genres (p.395). It is interesting to note that, according to Miller, fiction outstripped film and television in its queer representation: ‘Hungry for reflections of themselves and their lives that they couldn’t find at the movies or on TV, gays and lesbians continued to take their images from fiction’ (2006, p.444).

As shown by the graphs in the second chapter, LGBT fantasy in the 1990s followed the general trend of the ‘gay fiction boom’, with a significant and sustained increase in titles. Interestingly, though, the genre appears to ‘lag’ somewhat, both reaching its peak of publishing and dealing directly with openly LGBT characters some years after LGBT science fiction did both.

The uncovered LGBT fantasy literature also replicates a wider cultural issue, discussed in more depth later in this chapter: the near-absence of transgender characters in the literature. The label ‘LGBT’ that was generally used through this research is somewhat ahistorical: Gallagher’s bluntly-titled article ‘For Transsexuals, 1994 is 1969’ (*The Advocate*, 1994) discussed the rise of transgender and trans rights in the early 1990s as well as transgender activists’ clashes with the gay and lesbian community over inclusion and marginalisation, an important aspect of LGBT politics in the 1990s and after.

By the year 2000, while LGBT people and issues were still controversial, LGBT rights and especially LGBT visibility in both real and fictional media had undergone sea-changes. These changes, their influence on and expression in contemporary genre fiction, and how they can be inferred from LGBT characterisation and representation in genre literature, are essential elements in defining the cultural and historical landscapes within which LGBT fantasy novels were conceived, published, and read.

### *Identities and relationships in the literature*

The presentation and interpretation of queer identities and relationships in the collected LGBT fantasy literature is a highly complex endeavour. As mentioned in the discussion of coding, it is often difficult to strictly and consistently label the various identities present in the texts: this is exacerbated by the frequent tendency of characters in the literature to avoid self-declaration or self-identification as LGBT (an interesting trend in itself). This led to an unavoidable overlap between several of the codes used: a text with a relationship between women (F) was always by definition considered to be of lesbian interest (and therefore received the code L), even if neither character was explicitly identified as a lesbian. In fact, it became clear when analysing the collected texts that although it was essential to catalogue and code both identities and relationships in the literature, it was not possible to definitively separate the influences each had on the genre, nor their impact within their own texts: very often in the literature queer identities are expressed through the medium of queer relationships.

As it happens, however, one of the goals of this research was to focus not just on the sexual orientation and gender identity of LGBT characters in the literature, but also on their romantic and sexual relationships. It was felt that looking at a character primarily in terms of their sexual/gender identity risked over-focusing on the fact of that identity rather than the variety of contexts within which it could be expressed. This is not always the case, of course: there is a great deal of potential for representation and characterisation of LGBT characters through depicting their coming out and/or awakening to a queer sexuality, and this forms part of a larger case study later in this chapter. However, considering LGBT characters in the context of their relationships has the potential to give a more dynamic perspective on their representation in the literature, as well as a sense of how their identities are expressed in romantic and sexual contexts. Another reason the representation of LGBT characters' romantic relationships bears discussion is that a character in a relationship is often considered to be engaging far more actively with their sexuality: sexual identity in itself can often be considered a passive (and unthreatening) aspect of an LGBT character, whereas a character in a queer relationship has shifted the locus of their sexuality from the theoretical to the real.

With this in mind, this section will explore the trends in identity and relationship



presentation in the text in an integrated fashion rather than making an ultimately futile attempt to completely separate out the influences of individual identities and relationships. The one exception to this rule is the treatment of transgender identities and the relationships of transgender characters in the literature. Rather than integrating the discussion of transgender identities and relationships into the wider discussion, it is instead necessary to begin with and to discuss these identities as a discrete presence. This is partly due to their limited presence in the literature, and partly an attempt to avoid conflating transgender identity (a gender identity) with LGB identities (sexual identities and orientations). Although these are not the same and arguably should be approached separately, due to their inhabiting related cultural spaces and often being considered part of a queer 'spectrum' it seemed best, as discussed in the third chapter, to actively seek out and include transgender representations in this research rather than excluding them, while bearing in mind their distinct and separate characteristics. The research goal in this case was to include and explore these identities while avoiding the multiple pitfalls of elision, exclusion, and conflation.

## *Transgender representation in the literature*

Over the course of the research it became clear that there were very few instances of primary transgender representation in the fantasy literature of the period under examination. Although elements of gender transformation (usually both magical and brief) occur in the wider genre of fantasy, and an exploration of gender roles is not uncommon, actual transgender characters (either identified or identifiable as such) are rare, with only six texts by four authors on the final shortlist including primary transgender characters. Even there, the status of these characters as ‘truly’ transgender (however problematic that designation) is questionable and very much a matter of reader response and identification.

In an effort to articulate expectations, it may be easier to outline what is *not* present. There is no text in the uncovered literature that presents a transgender narrative in any way similar to a ‘standard’ gay narrative: a character realising they are fundamentally different from the norm on an identity level, coming to terms with this, and coming to express it to others around them and to their society. Nor are there characters present (again, the model for this being gay characters) who have integrated a transgender identity and present it as simply another aspect of their existence: all characters in the literature are presumed to be cisgender unless stated otherwise, and they are not stated otherwise. To deconstruct that assumption would be intriguing, but is not the primary work of this thesis: ultimately identifications must be either explicitly stated or reasonably inferred to be considered present in a work. In fact, not only are ‘expected’ (or even stereotypical) transgender presences absent, those representations that do exist in the literature are almost exclusively transgender by association rather than by explicit presentation. A summary of the relevant literature will demonstrate this. Jack Chalker’s *Riders of the Winds* (1988) has a character, Sam, with a confused gender (and sexual) identity who is at one point magically brainwashed into thinking of herself as a man trapped in a woman’s body and encouraged to present masculine traits: this is temporary, although her later identification as a lesbian persists. Chalker’s work is generally problematic, as discussed in the third chapter, but there is possibly a conflation of lesbianism with transgender identity occurring here: at best Sam is a character who could be described as ‘questioning’ her gender identity for a portion of the text, but who ultimately claims a cisgender identity.

Gael Baudino’s ‘Dragonsword’ trilogy (1988 to 1992) and Judith Tarr’s *A Fall of Princes*

(1988) both deal with characters who are permanently transformed from one sex to another: a group of men are transformed unwillingly through magic in Baudino's work, and in Tarr's a man willingly undergoes a magical transformation for political reasons. In contrast to the reasonably common device of sex-change through magical means in the broader fantasy tradition, these changes are meaningful, traumatic, and permanent:

She was all raw, looking for pain wherever she turned. Pain had brought her to the choosing; pain had made the choice, and pain had wrought the woman where a man had been. (Tarr, 1988, p.297)

These transformations are not simply acknowledged as traumatic and left at that: both Tarr and Baudino explore the consequences of those traumas in depth. A number of the men transformed to women in Baudino's trilogy kill themselves due to feeling unable to cope, and the later novels of the trilogy focus on the personal narratives of two survivors and how they create new identities for themselves. It is important to note that in both authors' works these characters are presented as cisgender and fully comfortable in their sex and gender before the transformation: the novels almost exclusively deal with the trauma of such a change and how the characters must react to and cope with it. Ironically, then, rather than presenting the expected transgender narrative of a character whose gender and sex differ from the beginning and who undergoes a process of personal transition, these novels present almost the reverse: cisgender characters who, within the course of the text, effectively become transgender. These characters are not readable as transgender because they have *changed* gender, they are readable as transgender characters because they are now in the same sex/gender disparity situation as transgender people, since the presumption is that they were cisgender and happy with their sex and gender before. They have, bluntly, been transformed into transgender people.

This becomes very clear when these characters attempt to adjust to their new identity and its social context. Sarevadin in Tarr's *A Fall of Princes* worries she will not be accepted by her subjects, has a fraught conversation with her mother where she begs for acceptance, uses a different form of her name post-transformation (or post-transition): characters around her are even anxious about accidentally misgendering her or using her former name for fear of hurting her! The direct parallels to transgender issues could not be clearer. In Baudino's *Duel of Dragons* Marrget changes her name to Marrha and attempts to

understand and construct a female identity, while Wykla is rejected by her family; both attempt to establish relationships, Marrha with a man and Wykla with a woman. Here we see that transgender identity and sexual orientation are understood to be different and provided with multiple possible transgender narratives. Baudino even has a strawman character from Earth discuss trans-exclusive feminism and the idea that trans women are men attempting to ‘infiltrate’ feminism: unsubtle, perhaps, but certainly a deliberate effort to engage with transgender issues.

These transgender issues, while important, are not the primary focus of either Tarr or Baudino’s work: Baudino uses her transgender characters to explore aspects of femaleness and feminism, while Tarr’s Sarevadin is used to deconstruct patriarchy and gender politics. This could be variously interpreted as either elision or progressiveness: either the transgender characters have identity and meaning beyond their label, or they exist only for the narrative function they can provide. Unfortunately, Sarevadin’s being revered as ‘the Dweller in the Two Houses, the mystery and the sacrifice’ (Tarr, 1988, p.335) and Baudino’s character Marrha being forgiven for her past as a rapist partly because she (according to Baudino’s ideas of gender) is no longer capable of rape as a woman both seem to suggest that the primary function of these characters is not to be representative but rather to enable the authors’ exploration of other ideas. Several other difficult questions arise: in particular, why is the device of magical transformation used to *create* rather than to resolve transgender identity, and why are these authors using ‘created’ or analogous transgender characters (through a fantastical approach) rather than a more mimetic approach of including naturalistic transgender characters?

Considered cynically, using ‘created’ transgender characters might be said to allow Tarr and Baudino to deal with transgender issues and have characters that could be read as transgender without having to include ‘real’ transgender characters. It is necessary, though, to consider when these texts were written. All five texts discussed so far were published in the period 1988-1992, a time when there was little public understanding of transgender issues. With this in mind, authors may have wished to present their readers with an initial reference point (the characters’ original identities) from which to explore a transgender identification: this also has the potential to allow a greater identification by a cisgender reader, who might perhaps imagine how traumatising they would find such an experience and thereby acquire some empathy for those who undergo equivalent experiences.

Ultimately, then, the expectation that transgender characters would be consistently portrayed in high-mimetic style in this literature may have been a limitation of the researcher's approach. Expecting authors of fantasy to automatically represent characters of whatever kind mimetically may do the genre a disservice by ignoring its potential to portray identities in new ways: these authors instead used the motifs and transformative potential of fantasy to represent transgender identities in a way unique to the genre and thereby added to a wider discourse of representation within the time and context in which they were writing. These characters are clearly transgender characters, used to represent transgender identities and work with transgender issues and themes: to disregard them by claiming they defy expectation is to be ignorant of the purposes of queer portrayal. Turning to the final text with transgender elements, Tom Arden's *Sisterhood of the Blue Storm* (1999), there are hints of a shift in the genre toward more mimetic representations of transgender people, but still – a decade after Tarr and Baudino's work – only hints. In a deeply coded scene, Tagan the eunuch confesses to a friend that he chose to become a eunuch as it was 'the next best thing' (p.434) in his efforts to become '*what I am*' (ibid., emphasis in original). He tells the legend of the Isle of Vanic, a myth among eunuchs, who are waiting for one of them to discover it and show the way to the others:

'There's an enchantress there, they say, who works a great spell, though the price of it is high and the way is hard. It doesn't come in a magic word, it doesn't come in a flash of light. There'll be much to suffer, and all the life you've lived before will still be there in your memory and dreams, never to vanish. There'll always be that, oh, that *wrongness*. That was with you from the first. After all, it's a part of you. Part of what you are. But when a wrong is righted, what happiness comes then? What tears of joy might we shed in the end, could we but find our way to Vanic? Oh, it's a great spell. For our kind, the spell of spells. [...] They say she can work only *one* miracle, the enchantress of Vanic, only this one. In other ways I'd still be what I am. Gainly, ungainly – oh, I wouldn't be like my lady, I know that. But that wouldn't matter, would it? How could it matter? The *one* miracle. That would be enough.' (Arden, 1999, pp.434-435, emphasis in original)

This desire for *resolution*, over and above the desire for representation, has a broader currency in the genre.

## *LGB representation in the literature*

Moving to consider the presence of lesbians, gay men, and bisexuals in the collected literature, the most fundamental question is the nature of their representation. If the fact of LGBT characters being represented as primary characters is the defining feature of this literature, then it is absolutely essential to assess *how* they are represented. Given a historical tendency to present LGB characters as tragic figures, perverts, or villains, the nature of their portrayal within a genre defined by their taking centre stage is highly significant: in a literature of their own, are they represented in new ways?

As discussed in the coding section, a certain amount of bisexual conflation and erasure occurred due to the coding considering (for example) novels with either lesbian or bisexual female characters to be 'of lesbian interest'. A general review of the portrayal of bisexuality in the literature suggests an evident dichotomy: bisexuality is either portrayed as entirely normal in a text or the characters talk about sexual orientation as though bisexuality does not exist: there seems to be little middle ground, but there are also no examples of bisexuals being discriminated against or stereotyped. It is also portrayed frequently in the literature, with a little under half the collected novels receiving a B letter code.

For the most part, the representations of LGB characters are broadly positive ones: this is perhaps to be expected in a literature defined by queer primary characters. Characters are not presented as fundamentally flawed or morally compromised by virtue of their sexual orientation, nor are they for the most part emotional cripples. However, certain stereotypes are evident in the genre, particularly in the earlier texts. Exploring lesbian and gay fantasy is complicated, however, by a sharp gender divide in the literature. Gay men are represented significantly more often than lesbians: of the 107 shortlisted novels, 67 exclusively feature gay/bisexual men (coded G), while 30 exclusively feature lesbian/bisexual women (coded L). Just as importantly, there is a clear split between what might be called 'gay male literature' and 'lesbian literature', shown by the fact that only eight novels feature both L and G codes: for the most part, novels on the shortlist fell into one category or the other. To take this into account, the representations of lesbian and gay identity in the literature will be examined separately, then the treatment of their relationships will be compared.

### *Trends in lesbian representation*

As mentioned above, while not ignored or marginalised in the literature lesbians were represented less often, appearing in approximately half the novels gay men do. However, the lesbian literature – and that term is used advisedly – is far more coherent as a set than the gay male literature. The majority of the lesbian novels in the genre clearly constitute a deliberately lesbian literature, not simply containing representations *of* lesbians but representation *by* and *for* lesbians – and utopian separatism is a significant theme therein. Rachel Wexelbaum offers an explanation for this:

In the 1960s and 1970s, feminists declared utopian literature fundamental to the women's movement. [...] For the first time “out” or self-identified lesbian writers began to share their visions in the realm of science fiction. In building their stories of “lesbian nations,” late twentieth-century lesbian writers revisited the ancient myths and legends of the Amazons as well as strong female goddesses, healers, and leaders of cultures from around the world. (2009, p.564)

Examples in the literature include Mary Jones's *Avalon* (1991) and Diana Rivers' 'Hadra' series. Although these novels are inherently opposed to patriarchal power-structures, they certainly do not partake of the stereotype of the misogynistic lesbian.

There is also a very broad feminist slant within virtually all lesbian novels in the genre, with a general trend of telling women's stories. Candace Dorsey's *Black Wine* has Essa create a space at the narrative heart of the world for women:

‘Yes, go through,’ said the old woman; ‘If you do not, there will be no silence for you ever. If you do not, the stories will rage in you, angry that you have not lived them. Go through and find the heart of the stories.’ (1997, p.285)

This trend of lesbian writing both creating sacred and protected spaces for women and perhaps *being* a sacred space is also shown in Rachel Pollack's *Temporary Agency*, where the text provides – and a large portion of the text *is* – a ritual space for the two characters to perform a rite demonstrating their connection and love for one another.

What of the women themselves? Generally they are empowered and capable people, as appropriate for primary characters in novels. They know themselves, are mostly comfortable in their identities (both in general and as lesbians), and are willing to take action to achieve their goals. Sexual empowerment is a common theme in their literature, although it is often presented subtly: for example, there is almost never an implication in the literature that women should only have sex with one person: while monogamy is common and often lauded, frequently characters have had several lovers, or experiment at some point in their lives and are not shamed for doing or having done so.

The main stereotype, or potential stereotype, implicit in the lesbian literature is that lesbian sexuality is presented as inextricable from female-female relationships. Lesbians are almost never portrayed as single (or at least very rarely remain so): this will be discussed further in the section on relationships in the genre.



### *Trends in gay male representation*

Gay men are more commonly represented in the genre than lesbians: they are also more commonly stereotyped. In particular the legacy of the 'tragic queer' persists, particularly with gay male characters. There is a tendency for gay men to be portrayed as doomed pathetic figures, the ur-example being Vanyel Ashkevron from Mercedes Lackey's 'Last Herald-Mage' series (1989-1990), who is discussed in more detail in the case study involving coming out: Vanyel ultimately sacrifices himself to protect a society that rejects him and spends eternity as a ghost at its borders. Although this is an extreme example, it is by no means the only one. Margaret Weis & Tracy Hickman's Mathew, in their 'Rose of the Prophet' series (1988-9), is an effeminate gay character trapped in a homophobic society and devoted to an unattainable heterosexual male protector. His story ends with 'an ache in his heart that was both joy and a sweet sorrow' (*The Prophet of Akhran*, 1989b, p.384) as he reconciles himself to being forever alone while the two people he loves make up a heterosexual couple. Even characters from non-fantastic backgrounds enact this trend: Richard in Robin Bailey's *Brothers of the Dragon* (1993) and its sequels, who is originally from Earth, mourns the love of his life throughout the series, and the only representation of his sexuality as a gay man is through a brief flashback of sex with his lover interspersed with memories of his sexual abuse as a child ... while he is tortured and sexually assaulted by a villain. The context is, at best, unfortunate.

In fact, authors writing gay men in stereotypical fashion is common in the literature, whereas this is generally avoided for lesbians (who occasionally wryly stereotype themselves). Constantine treats passive homosexuality as inherently feminine: when the boyish Daniel takes the active role in sex, he says 'Let me be a man for you' (Constantine, 1996, p.187) and considers himself a man afterwards. Arden does much the same thing: in his *Sisterhood of the Blue Storm* (2000) the young (passive) gay man Rajal is told 'There are things that make a man a man, and you must learn them, play upon them.' (p.458) Both Weis and Hickman's 'Rose of the Prophet' and Lackey's 'Last Herald-Mage' contain gay main characters who are some degree of effeminate stereotype: their protagonists are pretty, androgynous, and without facial hair.

Intriguingly, there is a diametrically opposite trend present in some of the literature, where gay characters (or men in relationships with men – the distinction is deliberate) are

presented as hypermasculine with highly-stereotyped traits to match. Terri Beckett & Chris Power's *Tribute Trail* (1999) is one example, where both male protagonists are strong powerful muscular warriors who are very popular with women. Several mythic-heroic depictions also embrace this trend wholeheartedly: in particular Stephan Grundy's *Gilgamesh* (1996) and *Attila's Treasure* (2000) focus on the masculinity and manly qualities of their heroes, as is common in the epic and heroic styles. This devotion to (and perhaps fetishisation of) masculinity is such a common trend that Mark Merlis's *An Arrow's Flight* (1998) explicitly calls it out. Merlis's Philoctetes, in an impassioned speech delivered in high camp style, deconstructs the gay worship of masculinity as an effort to fit in and to pass for straight:

'You can put on a uniform and line up with the rest of the boys, but when they take the team picture there you'll be. Anyone could pick you out. The sissy in the second row.' (Merlis, 1998, pp.361-2)

This implied desire for straightness – both sexually and as a desired personal quality – may be related to a phenomenon in the gay literature: that of the 'straight' protagonist who unaccountably has feelings for another man (often a less masculine one). The word 'unaccountably' is significant: often this is genuinely out-of-character, as with Roland's desire for the angelic Evan in Tanya Huff's *Gate of Darkness, Circle of Light* (1989). This doesn't apply to novels where a character is latently bisexual, or where his feelings for one person transcend his 'regular' sexual orientation (though this is a closely related phenomenon). Rather, in such cases, through internal drives and external objects of desire that the character often doesn't understand, this 'straight' character explores and enacts gay sexuality to various degrees. Sometimes this strange attraction is justified within the frame of the novel (the character had a repressed desire; the character's previous relationship with their object of desire overflows its accustomed boundaries; the character is being magically compelled): the desire Eric has for the elf Kory in Mercedes Lackey & Ellen Guon's *Knight of Ghosts and Shadows* (1990) is a good example. Sometimes this attraction cannot be justified within the text, and it becomes clear that the only possible source for this desire's being imposed upon the character is the author's direct intervention on the text: Saresha's willingness to have a relationship with Arris at the end of Catherine Cooke's *The Crimson Goddess* (1989) exemplifies this variant.

This is, of course, a very convenient mechanism to authorially explore a 'straight' character's participation in gay affection/romance while still maintaining the essential/integral quality of his straightness (otherwise this tension is removed, as you are simply writing a gay character). Actually engaging in sex with the object of desire (as opposed to feelings, attraction, affection, and even kissing) would remove that marker of 'straight', so when that label is still needful or desirable for the author that boundary is not crossed. A theory tentatively suggested by the genre material is that texts written for primarily straight female audiences will maintain their character's fundamental 'straightness' (and therefore the same-sex attraction will never be consummated), whereas texts written for gay audiences collapse this tension, allowing the character to consummate (and therefore performs and places the seal upon) their desire. In both cases the projected desires of the readership are being enacted – in one case, for romance; in the other, for sexual representation. Whether this phenomenon qualifies as writing gay characters is subject to debate, but it certainly produces literature that can be considered of gay interest.

## *Relationships in the literature*

Examining relationships in the collected literature more generally, a number of intriguing trends became evident. As noted in the third chapter, the codes M, F, and R were used singly or in combination to denote the relationships present in a text (see the third chapter for a breakdown of the coding system). The first notable trend is how common relationships are in the literature: the vast majority (90 out of 107) texts were given at least one relationship code, indicating at least one primary queer relationship within the text. This is perhaps surprising: given the assumption that the inclusion of relationships foregrounds and emphasises a queer sexuality, it might be expected that some authors would seek to avoid this for fear of alienating a wider readership. However, this does not seem to have been the case in the majority of texts, for which two explanations are suggested.

Firstly, these are texts which, by virtue of their inclusion in this research, already have a primary LGBT character, meaning that the authors of the texts had already made the decision to make queer sexuality and sexual orientation a significant element of their text. Deliberately avoiding representing relationships in their texts at that point might either be a betrayal of their intent (for those authors actively seeking to increase LGBT representation through their writing) or simply unnecessary: if the simple presence of a primary LGBT character in the first place did not discourage a reader, a relationship was perhaps unlikely to do so. Secondly, although the representation of relationships made LGBT sexuality more 'real' and therefore possibly more threatening, it also strongly enabled the normalisation of LGBT characters. With queerness (and particularly male homosexuality) being strongly identified with loneliness and being set apart, presenting these characters as developing and being present within relationships – often very deliberately 'normal' relationships with mundane problems and relatable day-to-day lives – allowed them to be constructed as, and related to as, 'real' people rather than a differentiated queer Other. This is consistent with a general trend in the literature of normalising LGBT characters.

However, the relationships of gay men and lesbians are likewise portrayed differently in the literature, often in gender-stereotyped ways. In particular, gay male relationships are either heavily sexualised or have no sexual content at all (so far as the reader can tell), and are inextricably associated with power relations; lesbian relationships are primarily shown

as tender, loving, and romantic, with a focus on the characters' emotional bond. The carefree no-strings-attached approach to sex of Rali from *The Warrior's Tale* is very much the exception: lesbians are almost always depicted as being in a relationship or acquiring one in the text. It is perhaps significant that 15 of the 17 texts without relationship codes are texts with a male primary character rather than a female one, reinforcing both the 'lonely gay man' and the 'lesbian defined by a relationship' stereotypes. Possibly both styles of novel are writing a particular view of 'relationships between men' and 'relationships between women': the first characterised by power dynamics (sex, violence, and tension); the second characterised by relationship-building, tenderness, and emotional expression. For example, where BDSM occurs in the literature it always does so in the context of a male/male relationship, suggesting such relationships are based upon power, unlike (for example) the lesbian Hadra, who literally cannot be governed by force.

## *Coming out literature*

For LGBT people, coming out is the creation of a personal mythology. Toni McNaron (2002) describes coming out stories as ‘a staple of lesbian and gay culture building’ (p.163) and notes that they tend to be ‘the focus of a great deal of gay and lesbian literature, including novels’ (ibid.). The commonly-used term ‘coming out story’ is itself not accidental: one’s coming out story is not simply a factual personal history but a crafted and shaped narrative that explains one’s identity and reconciles one’s past. This makes it a useful device on a number of levels: it gives the individual power to define how they conceive of their own history while simultaneously affirming the similarities between their own experiences and those of others like them. The existence of such stories, both within oral cultures (such as the ‘coming out workshops’ offered by many LGBT organisations, where personal stories are shared) and in print, also affirms the reality and truth of LGBT experience:

The existence of coming out narratives between printed covers is a sign of existence both for those featured therein and for those who will read their accounts. Such narratives also provide mirrors in which people unsure of their sexual identity may recognize themselves, mirrors that have the capacity to enable newly emerging gay men and lesbians to acknowledge their sexuality sooner and with less confusion and pain than is likely the case in the absence of coming out stories. (McNaron, 2002, p.163)

The importance of coming out narratives to LGBT literature, as well as in the lived lives of LGBT people, cannot therefore be overemphasised: Bosman & Bradford’s claim that ‘Coming out literature is a unique and usually affirming subset of the GLBT genre.’ (2008, p.28) establishes its place not just as a significant element of any queer genre but as a *defining* one. Because coming out (as commonly understood) cannot exist outside an LGBT context, it is a narrative tool possessed only by queer literature. This both gives such literature additional power and depth and establishes a fundamental difference between queer literature and other genres, reaffirming its genre position.

In his introduction to a collection of coming out narratives, Glen O’Brien declares ‘gay people must willingly and eagerly venture out into the world, and encounter challenges and

menaces, in order finally, authentically, to return home' (2003, p.15): the parallel to the quest motif of fantasy is clear. Fantasy, associated as it is with individual identity exploration, personal journeys, and quest narratives, should be an ideal space to present such stories, and LGBT fantasy even more so: in a genre defined by its primary LGBT characters, it would be expected that coming out narratives would play a significant role.

Certainly several common fantasy plot elements can be read as metaphors for queer difference and coming out. In many fantasy novels the gift of magic is possessed only by a special few who are inherently different from others around them, who often suffer difficulty and/or discrimination as a result, and who must be found and mentored by others like them before they can come into their own: Jill Ehnenn (2007), who applies this idea to a queer reading of Harry Potter and his 'closet under the stairs' (p.251), writes 'coming into identity as a wizard in many ways parallels the rhetoric of the closet and the process of coming out' (p.237). Another common element is a character being chosen by destiny or a higher purpose for something special: such stories are often easily interpreted in a queer context. For example, in Lackey's 'Heralds of Valdemar' series, being Chosen (with a capital C) as a Herald by one of the semi-divine Companion horses comes with the formation of an unbreakable emotional bond of trust, acceptance, and support: the implicit (and sometimes explicit) promise that the character is accepted, loved, and need never be alone again. It does not require tortuous analysis to read this as an idealised coming out. As Mark Lipton put in a discussion of queer youth searching for representation in popular culture, 'Whether or not queer subtexts are embedded within texts, what is important is the notion of interpretive reading.' (2008, p.178).

Upon the emergence of LGBT characters in fantasy (and the associated emergence of coming out narratives), it was no longer necessary to settle for finding *relatable* experiences as Lipton's queer youth (studied in 1990) did: it became possible to find directly *analogous* experiences in the literature. With LGBT characters having 'come out' within the genre as a whole by emerging as primary characters with explicitly defined sexualities, and the genre of LGBT fantasy having itself 'come out' by asserting itself as a recognisable and identifiable genre, it is both useful and necessary to examine how fantasy in general and LGBT fantasy in particular handles something so fundamental to queer experience.

In fact, the wider fantasy genre has been used not only to represent but to *effect* coming out. Heather Alexander was a popular and influential American folk and fantasy singer-songwriter for more than twenty-five years. At her last performance in 2006, she bid her fans farewell, walked through a gate of elder wood she had constructed on the stage, and was never seen again. Early the following year, a man named Alexander James Adams announced that he was Heather's heir, chosen to carry on her musical legacy (Anderson-Minchall, 2008). The explanation given by Adams for this replacement is both simple and fantastical: Heather was a changeling. When the boy Alex was born, he was stolen away by the fairy folk, and Heather was left in his place. She grew up living the life Alex was meant to lead, and Alex was trapped in fairyland unable to claim his birthright as a man: neither was therefore happy. This is, of course, a transgender narrative and a transgender coming out explained and enacted through fantasy. Adams later released an album of duets between himself and Heather (*Wintertide*, Adams & Alexander, 2007b), as well as recording the song 'He of the Sidhe' (Adams & Alexander, 2007a) explaining how he beat the Fairy Queen in a duel to earn the right to return, thus using his work to reinforce both his fantastical narrative and his identity.

Having established fantasy's potential to examine and effect coming out even outside of an expected LGBT context, it is necessary to examine how the literature of specifically LGBT fantasy treats this essential element of LGBT culture and identity. Looking to the materials collected in the course of this research – the gathered canon of 1987-2000 LGBT fantasy novels – it can be seen that coming out has, unsurprisingly, a very significant presence in this literature. More than a quarter of the authors dealt with the experience of coming out: many did so directly and several others addressed it in passing. This material is handled quite differently by various authors, with the two main divisions being as follows: coming out as depicted in primary- versus secondary-world fantasy novels, and coming out as treated in gay versus lesbian novels.<sup>11</sup> It seems best, therefore, to explore each in turn to see how the differences in their representations of coming out reflect on the potential of the LGBT fantasy genre.

One of the strengths of speculative fiction such as fantasy is that it can posit worlds and

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<sup>11</sup> Although queer fantasy unquestionably has scope for exploring the coming out experiences of transgender characters (and Lynn Flewelling went on to do so in her 2001 novel *The Bone Doll's Twin* and its sequels), the 1987-2000 literature did not contain any examples of this: therefore the discussion of coming out narratives in the LGBT fantasy genre will focus on coming out as it relates to sexual orientation.



societies where certain concepts simply do not exist. In much of the secondary-world literature, 'coming out' as gay/lesbian/bisexual/transgender is not a possible action or even a meaningful concept, as these are settings where a character's sexual orientation is not considered at all socially relevant: coming out is 'a historically and culturally bounded action taken by real people' (Balay, 2012, p.929). Examples include the worlds of Huff's 'Four Quarters' series and Duane's 'Tale of the Five': all of Duane's characters appear to be bisexual, and the only situation where a character's gender-preference is mentioned as a concern in 'Four Quarters' is when it ruled out a royal treaty-marriage. This does not mean that all secondary-world fantasies avoid representing coming out – far from it, and several present highly traumatic coming out narratives – but it is an option available to these texts that primary-world fantasies cannot exercise. As previously discussed, secondary-world fantasies also avoid contemporary terminology such as 'gay', making coming out an order of magnitude more difficult to represent: either it must be discussed with constructed terms or it must be enacted without its nature being explicitly stated. Sometimes these novels compromise by dealing with coming out at one remove: a good example is Constantine's *The Crown of Silence* (2000), where Khaster rejects the idea of being attracted to a man because he associates homosexuality with the decadent Empire that colonised his homeland; Khaster has a cultural prejudice against homosexuality, but not the expected one. The corollary to this is, of course, that where coming out narratives do exist in secondary-world fantasy, they do so because the author has made a choice to 'recapitulate homophobic and patriarchal tenets' (Battis, 2007, p.261) within the world they have created: without opposition or differentiation, coming out would lack any meaning.

Primary-world fantasies, whether set in the contemporary or in a historical (albeit fantastic) past, have more difficulty telling coming out stories that avoid personal trauma – arguably these stories are *rooted* in personal trauma – as the oppressions and difficulties inherent for character in such narratives cannot be escaped through creating an alternate world where these difficulties are lessened or do not exist. In addition, coming out narratives are, in many ways, a very recent social phenomenon: only made possible by the significant changes in attitudes toward LGBT people over the past century; only meaningful in the context of a certain understanding of sexual orientation. As Pearson (2005) put it, 'Stories depicting gay and lesbian characters or same-sex attraction invariably respond to dominant cultural conceptions of homosexuality, whether to accept, critique, or repudiate them.' (p.392)

With that in mind, the representation of coming out in fantasy (often considered a literature of the past) – much like the representation of LGBT characters themselves – can seem anachronistic when the fantasy takes place in a fictionalised past unless it is enacted in very particular ways. The authors of historical primary-world fantasies within this literature must therefore tell their characters’ stories in ways that are consistent with the limitations imposed by this form. In Peg Kerr’s *The Wild Swans*, Elias grows up in the 1960s and 1970s and internalises that:

Faggots were the lowest scum of the earth. If you were a faggot you might as well be dead. Elias had always known that, deep in his bones – long before the whispers had begun swirling around him. (Kerr, 1999, p.48)

Wherever Elias’ story leads, his starting point, due to the historically- and culturally-bounded context in which he is being written, must contain these particular oppressive elements. In fact, authors writing in this mode of historical primary-world fantasy tended to *emphasise* the homophobic contexts in which their characters began, perhaps to record and represent these milieux for readers who had not experienced them. Francesca Block, whose characters’ experiences of coming out are usually ‘so trouble free that it *must* be a joke on some level’ (Balay, 2012, p.936, emphasis in original), does the same in the prequel to her ‘Weetzie Bat’ novels: Dirk, whose blithe confession to his friend in *Weetzie Bat* (1989) is recounted by Balay as an example of trauma-free coming out, goes through self-hate, abandonment by a friend, and near-death experiences in the process of coming out to himself (i.e. realising his own sexuality) in the prequel, *Baby Be-Bop* (1995). Clearly Block’s characters can only come out trouble-free within the charmed circle of the contemporary and the magical realist world Block creates for them: in the past, which is another world entirely, trauma is inescapable. Dirk himself reflects on the experiences of older gay friends of his grandmother’s:

Grandma Fifi had two friends named Martin and Merlin who were afraid in a way Dirk didn’t want to be. They were both very handsome and kind and always brought candies and toys when they came over for tea and Fifi’s famous pastries. But as much as Dirk liked Martin and Merlin he knew he was different from them. They talked in voices as pale and soft as the shirts they wore, and they moved as gracefully

as Fifi did. Their eyes were startled and sad. They had been hurt because of who they were. Dirk didn't want to be hurt that way. He wanted to be strong and to love someone who was strong. He wanted to meet any gaze, to laugh under the brightest sunlight, and never hide. (Block, 1995, p.381)

This reminds the reader of the undeniable fact that, just as there are secondary-world fantasies where coming out is unimaginable due to characters' sexual orientation having no significance (or sometimes not even existing), there are *primary-world* contexts where coming out is just as unimaginable for historical and/or cultural reasons. In Michaela Roessner's *The Stars Dispose* (1997), not only is sexuality represented differently (given that it is a historical novel set long before modern interpretations of sexuality) it is understood by the primary characters that their relationship cannot be discussed or enacted in public: '[their colleagues'] discretion had to be matched by an equal silence and complete lack of display of public affection between Tommaso and Michelangelo' (p.226). Here 'coming out' is not a concept that could exist (nor, for that matter, is 'gay').

The disparities between primary- and secondary-world representations of coming out are key to the significance of these representations for the genre: coming out narratives allow LGBT fantasy to represent not only a character's story (and related mythology), but also the cultural frame within which it takes place. This use of the cultural framing of coming out in a novel, whether representing a real historical/cultural moment or suggesting a fictional context, allows the author to comment on and deconstruct the sociocultural assumptions that underlie sexual orientation while also encoding a queer cultural history, whether real or constructed.

Moving on to the second major difference in the literature, between gay coming out and lesbian coming out, it is immediately clear that the proportion of the literature that dealt with gay male coming out narratives was significantly higher. This matched the general trend in favour of gay men over lesbians in the literature: approximately two-thirds gay male and one-third lesbian. The more interesting distinction, however, is the differing approaches these novels take to discussing coming out: gay male novels focus on coming of age, whereas lesbian novels tend to give a more mature and reflective perspective on coming out, with a focus on broader societal issues.

Balay (2012) discussed the phenomenon of gay male novels adhering very strongly to a pattern of coming out as coming of age, noting that coming out can itself be a metaphor for 'the rebellious but proud identity-claiming of adolescence' (p.929): the young male protagonist reaches maturity through coming to terms with their sexual orientation and weathering the associated tribulations. Such coming out narratives are particularly associated with young adult fiction, and this has led to a number of fantasy novels containing coming out stories being considered young adult novels, perhaps by default. It therefore seems useful to examine two of the most influential: published seven years apart, Lackey's 'Last Herald-Mage' series (1989 onwards) and Lynn Flewelling's 'Nightrunner' series (1996 onwards) are both considered part of the young adult fantasy tradition and present very different gay male coming out (and coming of age) narratives.

Lackey's Vanyel Ashkevron is positioned as a proto-queer character very early on, both in the text and in his life: his father spent Vanyel's youth shielding him from 'even the idea that same-sex pairings were possible' (Lackey, 1989, p.121), and Balay (2012) claims Vanyel's description culturally codes him as gay: 'Vanyel doesn't need to shave, used to wear his sister's clothes, is more acrobatic than aggressive in his swordsmanship, loves fancy clothes and occasions to wear them, and is often called pretty and beautiful' (p.931). His coming out to himself involves shattering the metaphorical wall of ice he constructed around his feelings and is an emotionally wracking experience.

Flewelling's Alec experiences his coming out very differently. Alec, first of all, is not constructed as a 'homosexual character': although fitting the archetype of the attractive and naïve youth mentored by an older man, he avoids stereotype in ways that Vanyel does not. Alec is a skilled ranger and hunter, an extremely competent archer, and dresses plainly: while not coded as excessively masculine, he does not fit gay stereotypes. There is also the fact that Alec, unlike Vanyel, is attracted to women as well as men: his coming out is as much a sexual awakening, what Balay calls 'the gradual unfolding of Alec's self-knowledge, and then his desire' (2012, p.933). In fact Alec's coming out narrative is split into two: his sexual awakening and love of Seregil, and the revelation that like Seregil he is one of the 'faie (elves). It is this latter part of Flewelling's narrative that makes it impossible to read Alec's identity transformation in anything but a queer context: Balay considers the Aurenfaie (long form of 'faie) to be an 'extended metaphor' of a 'gay subculture' (2012, p.934).

Coming out is an extended interaction with oneself and with society, as is coming of age: both are processes of transformation that manifest both internally and externally. Vanyel deals with both elements at once, reshaping his self-identity and weathering significant social disapproval from his father and from a generally homophobic culture. Alec, on the other hand, splits his coming out in two due to Flewelling's device of 'faie. He can weather the personal sexual awakening and maturity – at one point thinking to himself 'You're waking up at last' (Flewelling, 1997, p.167) – before processing the more fundamental elements of identity shift implied by his 'faie nature, a shift in personal identity that is normally integral to a coming out narrative. This queer fantastical 'breathing space' helps make Alec's experience far less traumatic than Vanyel's.

Vanyel's relationship to his homosexuality is intrinsically linked to, and inextricable from, the attitudes of the society around him. This is made clear when the tipping point for Vanyel's suicide attempt is not his lover's death, but Vanyel hearing the unspoken thoughts of another Herald who disapproved of their relationship and blamed Vanyel for its tragic end. Similarly, Vanyel can only find a philosophy that portrays homosexuality positively by receiving aid from an external culture, the marginal and mysterious Tayledras, who also fulfil the functions of a gay subculture. Alec, however, finds himself in a society where there is no prejudice against same-sex encounters or relationships, so the main oppositions he must overcome are internal. Although his background in a culture and religious sect that opposes homosexuality are made much of, ultimately these personal demons are paper tigers: Alec has internalised no particular self-hatred or shame due to his upbringing, he does not consider his religious beliefs to be a significant obstacle to an interest in men or to a relationship with Seregil, and no representative of his religion (several of whom are significant characters in the narrative) disapproves of his relationship with Seregil. In fact, Flewelling's narrative reads as though Alec's faux-closeted background exists solely to give his coming out some significance: as noted earlier, coming out narratives cannot be told in a world entirely without prejudice against homosexuality.

Examining both Vanyel and Alec's stories, it is possible to construct a spectrum of this gay male 'coming out as coming of age' mode, with Vanyel as the nadir and Alec as the aspirational zenith: Vanyel's various traumas, emotional damage, continual closeting, and suicide attempt are as far as it is possible to be from Alec's slow, almost nonchalant,

emergence into a queer world and identity. Can Alec's story, then, be read as a reaction to Vanyel's? Certainly the impact of Lackey's 'Last Herald-Mage' on the literature was significant enough for this to be the case. This also suggests an evolution of expectations within the genre: while still aspirational, Flewelling's series could believably portray a coming out narrative as being 'no big deal' to anyone except the character himself, while still linking that character to a shared web of queer cultural experience through the use of a 'faie identity. In this way, the putative young queer reader identifying with Alec can be guided from the same starting point of a confused personal identity in a homophobic culture, but shown a path of progression far more positive than available in Lackey's 'Last Herald-Mage'.

Lesbian coming out, rather than being a direct personal narrative, tends to take the perspective of mature reflection and offer a wider societal perspective rather than focusing on the individual's experience. Two authors in particular use their characters' coming out scenes to argue for LGBT acceptance. In Sarah Dreher's *Gray Magic*, Gwen's difficult coming out to her family leads to Stoner making a long and angry speech about the cultural position of lesbians:

'Do you have any idea what it means to be a lesbian?' [...] 'We do the dirty work in this world. We set up crisis centres to protect you upright uptight *normal* women from battering husbands. We fight for your Medicare and Social Security. We push your wheelchairs and wipe up your urine when you're too old and feeble to do it yourself. We do all the work you're too ladylike to touch. And for that we're called names and fired from the jobs nobody wants. When we go in public restrooms we see hate written on the walls by people who are too ignorant to spell but claim the right to judge us. When we pick up a newspaper we see letters from Bible-quoting cretins telling us our gay brothers are dying of AIDS because God despises what we are. But we go on living, Mrs. Burton, because we earn the right. We live in a world of hate and still we manage to love. You live in a world of love, but you hate. I don't understand that. I don't understand it at all.' (Dreher, 1987, pp.13-14)

It is certainly no accident that this speech manages to inform any unaware reader about the difficulties and discrimination lesbians in 1987 faced on a daily basis: its function is not

merely cathartic but educational, as well as an appeal to action. While Gwen's distress and damaged relationship with her grandmother is not overlooked in the text, the function coming out serves in the text is very different from the gay male 'coming of age' mode.

This is not an isolated incidence of lesbian coming out being used to engage and appeal to the reader: writing seven years later, Ellen Galford includes a similar scene in *The Dyke and the Dybbuk* (1993), where the culturally Jewish Rainbow comes out as a lesbian to the very Orthodox Jewish Riva. Galford, however, broadens the scope yet further, using the scene not only to appeal to her readers' sensibilities or to make political statements (although it accomplishes both) but also to give a voice to the voiceless and tap into a queer cultural history:

Riva says nothing; Rainbow's words come slowly. But the room is nonetheless full of voices. Some voices ban, threaten, list the rules for trial by ordeal. [...] But a second phantom chorus sings louder than the first. Rainbow, borne on wings of her own desperation, has summoned up a battalion of supporters. The odd, the wild, the hopeful, the visionary, the smarter than is good for them, the reckless, the excommunicated, the ignored. Riva would not hear them, were it not for the fact they speak in the same language, use the same gestures, and wear the same scars or armbands as her saints. But this time, once in a millennium, they do not simply stand outside a lighted window, looking in at what they've lost. They float right through the glass and make themselves at home. Rainbow finds that she has finished speaking. Riva, catlike, studies invisible eddies in the air. (Galford, 1993, p.180)

Here it is not even necessary for the characters to speak: the sacred space created by coming out allows the voices that must be heard – the voices that in the past were *not* heard – to be heard, to be recorded, and to be remembered. Rainbow's voice has become all of their voices.

An interesting and unusual third approach is shown in Block's *I Was A Teenage Fairy* (1998), where an alternative to coming out that might be called 'coming away', a la Yeats, is presented: offering a magical transformation to make the hard personal reality of coming out unnecessary. It is clear, however, that Block is only representing desire, not a possible reality, and her novel deals with this hope in its characteristically beautiful yet

harsh fashion, when Griffin (closeted and repressing memories of sexual abuse) stands at a window considering suicide.

It is hard to say what really happened. Maybe Griffin did see Barbie and Todd and never leapt at all. Maybe he didn't see them. Maybe he let go of the window and was released into the night that was already inside of him. Maybe Griffin felt Todd and Barbie's love like a sparkling web of light spinning around him. Maybe the web of light was there after he leapt, singing in a high voice about coming away, to waters and to wild, away from the weeping that he could not understand. (Block, 1998, p.158)

Block's writing offers sympathy and understanding for the pain her characters go through, but refuses to offer false hope and easy answers. Griffin can make his choices and live or die, and his friends' love may or may not help him with that decision, but there is no world and no situation where the 'problem' of his closeting can be made nonexistent – even if that means he must suffer pain he cannot understand.

What function, then, does coming out and the presentation of coming out stories serve in the genre? The first and most obvious function coming out can perform is to immediately mark a text as an LGBT text. More generally, and by extension, its inclusion creates a narrative space that represents and solidifies LGBT presence and, most importantly, the personal mythologies of lived LGBT experience. It immediately makes a text relatable to LGBT readers, inviting them to share in the (personal, sacred) story being presented. Existing in both primary- and secondary-world fantasies, it creates a point of commonality between these often non-intersecting modes. Finally, its presence in the genre of LGBT fantasy strengthens that genre's unique quality, as it is a tool that (in its original form) no other genre can wield. Coming out literature, in short, strengthens the genre of LGBT fantasy in the same way the real act of coming out strengthens LGBT identity: by means of 'the empowerment inherent in the articulation itself'. (McNaron, 2002, p.164)



AIDS<sup>12</sup> was a pervasive presence in LGBT literature of the 1980s and 1990s. Possibly the earliest example in fantasy was Samuel Delany's 1985 'The Tale of Plagues and Carnivals', which not only used a very thinly-veiled metaphor for AIDS but also represented the condition in contemporary New York. Smith notes that in the late 1980s 'Gay male fiction [...] and other arts became suffused with images of pain, loss, decay, and death. At points, gay male arts and artists became nearly synonymous with AIDS.' (2000, p.27). While AIDS is not quite this universally present throughout the collected LGBT fantasy genre it continually recurs as a major theme, and its impact on the genre literature is undeniable. Even when not the major focus of a text it has a tendency to make itself known: a common mechanism is a subplot involving a character dying from AIDS, as seen in *Imajica* (Barker, 1991), *Gossamer Axe* (Baudino, 1990), and even the young-adult novel *Weetzie Bat* (Block, 1989). In every representation within the canon, characters with AIDS, whether primary characters or not, were gay men, despite the attempt of contemporary activists and writers to avoid AIDS being constructed purely as a gay disease. That being said, the literature this research has collected is by its nature biased toward including and representing LGBT experiences, and this would naturally lead to gay AIDS experiences being far more likely to occur in the literature than the (rarer, particularly in the late 1980s and early 1990s) presence of non-gay people with AIDS. As this research focuses on LGBT literature rather than AIDS literature more generally, this section will likewise focus on the influence of AIDS on the emergent LGBT fantasy genre rather than its impact on fantasy more generally.

Bearing this in mind, it is highly significant that in the collected literature AIDS is only present in primary-world fantasies or what might be called 'transition' fantasies: fantasy novels that are either set entirely on a contemporary Earth (with fantastical elements), or those that begin there but later move their action (and characters) to a fantastical secondary world. Purely secondary-world LGBT fantasies, those with no connection to Earth and the modern day, do not feature AIDS in any way, shape, or form, even through allusion or metaphor. The closest this genre comes to an out-of-context reference to AIDS is in the

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<sup>12</sup> Chris West (2002) correctly points out that 'AIDS is not, simply, a disease; it is, rather, a particular stage of a disease' (p.118) and that confusing HIV+ and AIDS leads to 'conceptual confusion' (ibid.). Without disagreeing in the least, I have nonetheless chosen to use 'AIDS literature' and 'AIDS' in this section, partly because it was the contemporary term and partly because the term AIDS has become associated with its representational literature.

historical fantasy *Strange Devices of the Sun and Moon* (Goldstein, 1993), where Will's disapproving father, who speaks against 'the sin of Sodom' (p.193), maintains that 'unbelievers brought the plague upon themselves' (ibid.): here the subtext speaks louder than the text and it is clear which plague the reader is intended to infer. Due to the text's nature as a historical fantasy, however, this is best read as an attempt to historicise a particular cultural response to AIDS rather than being an offhand topical reference: it evokes Pascal Thomas's comment that 'too many people in our own world still think AIDS is the homosexuals' own problem (or even their own fault!)' (1991, p.35). In other words, by referencing AIDS outside of a contemporary primary-world context Lisa Goldstein is establishing precedent and historical context for its cultural impact: this is an example of a wider tendency in the literature to use fantasy to historicise LGBT presence.

As a prominent presence in the genre, AIDS is *sui generis* as, despite being in theory a perfectly viable candidate for re-representation or reinterpretation through the lens of a secondary-world fantasy as many other contemporary issues have been, this did not occur with AIDS in practice. Instead it remained confined – or quarantined – within texts connected to contemporary Earth. Investigating why this is the case, and how it *is* in fact represented by those texts where it features as a major story element, has the potential to provide very useful insight into how fantasy deals with the inescapably real and mimetic in the form of AIDS, as well as how the queer cultural impact of the AIDS epidemic was encoded in LGBT fantasy and influenced its growth and development as a genre.

Five texts on the research shortlist have AIDS as a primary plot element; they are what might be called AIDS novels, or at least novels about AIDS. Daniel Kane's *Power and Magic* (1987), Michael Bishop's *Unicorn Mountain* (1988), Clive Barker's *Sacrament* (1996), Mark Merlis's *An Arrow's Flight* (1998), and Peg Kerr's *The Wild Swans* (1999) span the research timeline while providing very different perspectives on, and representations of, AIDS. It should therefore be possible to use these texts to construct a timeline of AIDS representation in LGBT fantasy, examining the treatment of the subject in each text and the functions these texts perform as well as how they relate to the changing social and cultural contexts of AIDS at the times of their writing.

Working chronologically, it is necessary to begin with *Power and Magic* and *Unicorn Mountain*. Published in 1987 and 1988 at the height of the AIDS epidemic among gay

men, they are contemporary with Randy Shilts' seminal *And the Band Played On* (1987). While *Power and Magic* is not an especially interesting or well-written text in itself, it has a strong claim to be one of the earliest fantasy novels about AIDS, perhaps *the* earliest if Delany's 'The Tale of Plagues and Carnivals' in *Return to Nevèryon* (1985) is not considered an independent novel due to its publication within a larger novel of collected stories; with this in mind, it is useful to show one of the ways fantasy authors wrote of AIDS in the earliest years of its presence in the genre. Both novels are transition fantasies, albeit in very different ways. *Power and Magic* brings a character from Earth to a fantasy world to combat a demon representing AIDS and to ultimately reject fantasy, returning to Earth; *Unicorn Mountain* presents a cynical and depressed character dying from AIDS on Earth, who rejects fantasy as a lie but later finds another world beyond death. In fact, these texts are mirrors of one another in this regard, taking different views on the utility of fantasy and the value of mimesis. Both novels are also polemical, but use different strategies to achieve their objectives: *Power and Magic* is an unashamedly blatant allegory, with a demon king whose name is an anagram of AIDS and whose titular Key to Power and Magic is a golden cross; *Unicorn Mountain* gives the appearance of metaphor, with the unicorns dying from a disease similar to AIDS, but subverts the reader's expectations when it becomes clear that it is in fact AIDS and the unicorns are very real and tangible beings.

It is this playing with 'realness' – the unavoidable realness of AIDS and the questionable realness of fantasy worlds – that characterises this early AIDS fantasy literature and Bishop's novel in particular. In *Unicorn Mountain*, Bo contrasts a unicorn figurine and a condom, claiming the condom represents reality and the other a lie. His passionate outburst a moment later makes his meaning clearer:

'I'm saying there's no protection! No goddamn protection! Let no-one argue differently. Let no-one hand you a two-bit unicorn when reality's so brutally expensive that only your life will pay for it.' (Bishop, 1988a, p.106)

There is no protection from AIDS; no fantasy will save you; no lie can put the gloss on the harsh truth of illness and the inevitability of death. Bishop presents this as the reality that Bo – and, of course, those people living with AIDS in 1987 – must accept for lack of an alternative. It is expected, of course, that fantasy will offer some such alternative to Bo. In a way it does, but in another it does not: Bo's attempt to obtain healing through Native

American ritual practice fails, but ultimately he (and later the rest of the world) discover the presence of a real and tangible afterlife whence came the unicorns. In Bo's case, however, this is through suffering a terrible death which is in no way romanticised.

It wasn't like release. It wasn't like freedom. It was like dreaming that you weighed *tons*. [...] Bo hated the way death felt. He had believed that death would release him from the degradation of his AIDS, but now that he was dead a down-bearing pain lay full length upon him, and he couldn't get out from under it. Would anything free him from the terrible heavy-limbedness imprisoning him in his own corpse? Yes. (Bishop, 1988a, p.472, emphasis in original)

There is no whitewashing of the reality of AIDS, but nonetheless Bishop attempts to use fantasy to represent, to grant solace, and to promise change: in much the same way Bo realises the unicorns exist 'in a way that redeemed them from both banality and wish-fulfilment daydreams' (p.477) Bishop performs the same feat with his fantastical representation of AIDS. Bo squares the circle by using the image of the unicorns to promote condom use – a very practical step against the spread of AIDS – while still hoping for the redemptive grace of change promised by Bishop that is delivered when he passes 'into the full mystery of the other world' (p.479).

Conversely, Kane's *Power and Magic* (1987) is depressive and sordid in tone, refusing to represent anything beautiful without later tainting it. Even Paul and Gethalon's love, the most uplifting aspect of the text, is stained forever in their eyes due to unknowingly being incestuous: '[...] horror and pain lay in that truth, pain that both of them would feel forever' (p.189). Refusing the reader any solace whatsoever, Kane even strips away the threadbare modesty of his allegory in his description of the Demon King 'Dias':

The great black mass had formed. The frenzy of evil that was the Demon King towered over him. Gaping jaws and red bulging eyes protruded from a hideous face scarred by corruption, oozing with dreadful sores. His long talons tore through the air, and he roared loudly, his foul odour filling the chamber with the stench of death and decay. His massive body was bloated and festering, and no-one present could bear to look upon him, so awful was he. (Kane, 1987, p.201)

This avatar of the corruptive death of AIDS is defeated in Kane's novel, but it is a hollow victory: all the magic is lost from both worlds, and Paul returns embittered to an Earth no less free of the threat of AIDS than it was before. Although Kane attempts to construct his ending as a triumph for faith and hope, he fails and instead reveals a fundamental bitterness and despair in the face of queer oppression and especially of AIDS: the 'pain, loss, decay, and death' Raymond Smith (2000, p.27) describes as characteristic of gay male AIDS fiction is at its rawest in this novel.

This difference in tone and representation between these two novels is best explained by their differing authorial goals. Whereas Kane was clearly interested in using a fantasy metaphor to express the injustice of queer oppression and the horrific reality of AIDS, Bishop, in his own words, took the stock fantasy staple of unicorns 'and tried to make them real creatures that affect the lives of the people in the story' (Bishop, 1988b, p.65), in the process creating a text that could use fantasy to affect the real by reinterpreting and reimagining what both of those mean, for people with AIDS in particular. What they have in common, however, is that they were both representing a terrible reality that had no contemporary hope of resolution.

Compared to the drawn-out personal traumas of the first two novels, Barker's *Sacrament* (1996) is a grim slap in the face. Published eight years after *Unicorn Mountain*, it comes from a very different historical moment and offers a very different perspective on AIDS. With the first combination drug therapies for AIDS becoming available in 1992 and highly active retroviral therapies coming into use in 1995, AIDS was on the cusp of no longer being an immediate death sentence by 1996 and Barker's approach reflects this. Rather than facing the inevitability of death, his characters must confront the barrenness of extinction as they live in the aftermath of the AIDS crisis. The main character, Will, is a wildlife photographer chronicling species that are on the verge of extinction and dealing with an enemy whose quest is to personally cause the extinction of as many species as possible. Barker does not bother to conceal his metaphors, and the parallels are drawn very obviously: AIDS was an extinction event for gay men, and *Sacrament* forces the reader to tally the dead. Even Barker's attempt to bring Will a positive epiphany is utterly grim:

'We're not going anywhere because we don't come from anywhere. We're spontaneous events. We'll just appear in the middle of families. And we'll keep

appearing. Even if the plague killed every homosexual on the planet, it wouldn't be extinction. Because there's queer babies being born every minute, it's like magic.' He grinned at the notion. 'You know that's exactly what it is, it's magic.' (Barker, 1996, p.494)

Ultimately *Sacrament* performs the function of drawing a line under the worst of the AIDS epidemic; it is a novel of looking back and taking stock, with an undertone of mourning for the era that was lost. There is no possibility of a fantastic transformation here: the pain is clearly too raw, and it would be an insult to the dead.

The final two AIDS novels in the LGBT fantasy canon, Merlis's *An Arrow's Flight* (1998) and Kerr's *The Wild Swans* (1999), take an unexpected approach. Rather than mimetically representing AIDS, both novels use the mode of fantasy to reposition and retell it as a cultural history, encoding it in epic myth (*An Arrow's Flight*) and fairytale (*The Wild Swans*). However, both novels refuse to use fantasy to avoid the hard truths of the AIDS epidemic. *An Arrow's Flight*, drawing from Greek myth, nonetheless refuses to mythologise its most important elements. In particular, the pivotal scene where Philoctetes (dying in hospital) is petitioned by Heracles is worthy of mention, as the narrator flatly declares his unwillingness to change the narrative to have Philoctetes be cured:

Maybe some son of Asclepius is, right now, concocting that miraculous salve. But he did not do it for Philoctetes. Heracles did not appear. We are where we are. If I owe nothing else to the dead, I can at least refrain from wheeling out Heracles. (Merlis, 1998, p.358)

Merlis' blunt assertion that 'no-one has mentioned the cure' (ibid.) is similar to Kerr's refusal in *The Wild Swans* to lift the 'curse' of AIDS on her contemporary gay characters in the same way the sorcerous curse on Eliza's brothers was lifted: in her author's note she declares 'we haven't yet found the way to break the curse' (Kerr, 1999, p.391). Both novels project helplessness in the face of AIDS, and both acknowledge that all they can do is chronicle the past so that it will be remembered. Merlis's brand of fatalism melds Greek tragedy and contemporary medicine in memorable fashion:

Well, it has always been so. We have always belonged to the Fates. We just never

thought the Fates were so tiny. (Merlis, 1998, p.232)

Elias' cry 'If I can't save them, and I die for nothing, what did all the silence and suffering accomplish? What was it all *for*?' (Kerr, 1999, p.389) emphasises the terrible cruelty of realism: real events do not follow narrative logic, and suffering is often purposeless. Eliza, living out a fairytale, at least had the consolation that her silence and suffering was the salvation of her brothers: to undergo the same trials and to have nothing to show for it would be heartbreaking. If anything, though, Eliza's story shows the unreality of fantastical solutions: she does not meet the conditions set by the curse (not finishing the clothing) but nonetheless is rewarded with almost-complete success. This is contrasted with the girl in the present day who has lost all her brothers save one, with nothing to be done to save them. The fairytale has been softened too much: there are no marks given for *trying* to meet the conditions of a geas; one succeeds or fails.<sup>13</sup> Seán's blunt retelling of the Children of Lir is far more on point: "She breaks the curse. But it hardly matters. Once the spell is broken, they all die at the end of the story." (p.220)

While these novels attempt to convey the purposeless nature of suffering, they are not themselves without purpose. *An Arrow's Flight* attempts to record the (romanticised) freedoms of the era before AIDS, described as an age of heroes, in a paean to early gay liberation:

They sailed west without a chart, beneath night skies with unnamed constellations. They plummeted off the edge, or found safe harbors that they claimed for all of us. They did it for everyone who had come before them. The Eronauts lived out their freedom for all the generations that had been caged, so that every impulse was a holy obligation. They did it for everyone who came after. And, a league ahead of the pathfinders, Philoctetes.

Now the sea-lanes they charted have closed behind them. All they discovered, that had waited since the dawn of time to be found, swallowed up. No-one will ever go that way again, not even if the cure is found. Partly because we will never own our bodies again, as they did. (Merlis, 1998, pp.231-2)

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<sup>13</sup> I am indebted for this insight to a friend who wishes to remain nameless, who upon hearing the ending of Andersen's 'The Wild Swans' for the first time exclaimed 'She was lucky to get anything! That's not how that works!' Indeed.

Even *The Wild Swans*, slated by Susan Knabe for being ‘unable to move beyond mourning’ (2002, p.84), also conveys the growth of a warm and loving gay relationship and a welcoming queer community. Kerr can offer that: even if Elias and Seán could not receive a magical solution, they were able to be together and express their love for one another within a community of others like them, despite hate, and that is something that really and truly could never have been in Eliza’s time, no matter how fantastical it was.

The primary function, however, of both of these texts and of the AIDS literature within the LGBT fantasy canon, is to record and to remember the AIDS epidemic as a part of LGBT cultural history; this is both necessary and traumatic. As Merlis put it, ‘Even to paint Philoctetes is to make his misery perpetual. [...] Our only defence that, if we didn’t make his misery perpetual, no-one would remember him at all.’ (1998, p.337) That would – perhaps – be a worse fate. What this set of AIDS novels have done, then, is to culturally encode and mythologise a record of the AIDS experience that is rooted in the contemporary perspective of each text, while drawing from the toolbox of the fantastical in different ways to render their stories uniquely unforgettable. If entirely mimetic accounts run the risk of being forgotten or blurred by shifting perspectives on the past, an AIDS cultural history reflected through the glass of myth and folklore can be engaged with on a different, and perhaps deeper, level. As for why AIDS was not represented in secondary-world fantasies of the era, either directly or metaphorically, reviewing the literature leads to the suspicion that AIDS was considered far too immediate and real to be taken out of its native context: the contemporary world. No secondary world could bear the weight of it.



## Conclusion

The purpose of this conclusion is twofold: to take a step back and examine the nature of the LGBT fantasy genre as revealed by its collected canon, and to reflect on the process of having defined this genre and located the canon. This is best approached not just from a practical perspective of providing material and content access points for future research practice, but also from a theoretical one that acknowledges the complexity of conducting canonical research in a hidden yet contested genre. Given this dual purpose and the focus on the texts throughout the literature, it seems appropriate to frame the initial discussion in the context of quotes from the uncovered literature itself, allowing it in a way to speak for itself.

‘See what there is to see. Hear what there is to hear. Touch whatever you touch. Speak the thing you must speak.’ (Pollack, 1994, p.181)

Having made a strong case for considering LGBT fantasy as a discrete genre, and having constructed a comprehensive canon for it, it is useful to reflect on what that canon revealed about the nature of its genre. Firstly, and perhaps unsurprisingly, it revealed that LGBT fantasy, much like its parent genre fantasy, is a literature of desire. In fact, it is a literature of *desires*, which resonate and intersect in complex ways throughout its canon and are worthy of individual discussion.

‘Sometimes I feel like that,’ he went on softly, ‘like I’m dying of thirst. Only it’s not water that I need. I don’t know what it is.’ (Bailey, 1996, p.149)

The most fundamental desire found in the genre is the desire of LGBT people for one another. This includes sexual desire, of course – and that aspect should not be ignored or elided – but also a broader desire to *know* and connect with one another.

Do you know how sometimes you see a man, and you’re not sure if you want to get in his pants or if you want to cry? Not because you can’t have him; maybe you can. But you see right away something in him beyond having. (Merlis, 1998, pp.12-13)

This revealed desire is not only a desire of characters in the literature for one another, but also a desire for connection that reaches outside the genre: it is a desire for a connection *with* the genre. (To a certain extent it shares this with fantasy, although the desires may differ.) It is the desire enacted by the Gaylaxians lobbying for another edition of *Uranian Worlds*, by the countless online readers searching for (and compiling) reading lists with LGBT characters, and by a researcher working to uncover and chronicle the texts of a hidden LGBT fantasy genre. The genre therefore engages its readers directly through the desires it encodes. This desire to connect overlaps with the broader queer desire for representation:

Like all his kind, like any group, minority, clique, élite, he has searched out that which represents him. Hunted for the recognised spark that allows him the occasional chance to see himself, his life, his very breath reflected back at him from the creative screen. (Duffy, 1998, p.105)

The literature of LGBT fantasy reveals a strong desire to be represented, in as many contexts as possible. LGBT characters in this genre are presented *in* the present, in the past, in the near-future, in alternate pasts and histories, and most importantly in folklores and mythologies. The genre, in response to the desire for representation, colonised as much temporal and cultural space as possible.

We all need to see representations of ourselves in the world, whether that world is real or not. (Griffith & Pagel, 1996, p.10)

Finally, the most powerful desire revealed in the literature is a desire for LGBT acceptance: particularly in the primary-world literature, characters frequently struggle against homophobia, oppression, or simply the negative cultural contexts they have internalised surrounding their identities. It is not uncommon for earlier novels of the literature to actively argue for LGBT acceptance outright within their texts.

*'I want a happy ending!'* (Patton, 1997, p.538)

This desire for acceptance leads into the second major aspect of the literature: the tension between the queer and the normal. This tension was always present by virtue of the genre's

definition as a space for characters that were considered ‘queer’ in one sense but not necessarily queer in another. As the genre stabilised and defined itself, however, it began to contain a growing silent majority of normalised LGBT characters: characters whose sexuality was an important aspect of their identity, but who did not necessarily partake of the queer in its transgressive, identity-shattering, theoretical sense. This, of course, was a natural progression. Margins and marginalised identities are inherently more queer than the normalised and stable centre: as LGBT fantasy characters took centre stage as primary characters, and accumulated a genre of their own, their literature slowly lost its radical queer potential. In fact, the genre of LGBT fantasy was the means by which ‘LGBT’ and ‘queer’ became decoupled: it provided a context for the everyday and mimetic representation of LGBT characters.

In effect, LGBT fantasy exchanged its transgressive potential for cultural acceptance. The shape of the genre’s development thus perfectly matches Tynyanov’s (1924) pattern for constructive genre principles, as follows: the strongest possible argument for its status as a genre.

*A principle emerges in relationship to an automatised principle.*

LGBT fantasy arose in response to a wider fantasy genre that did not exercise its queer potential.

*It seeks out the readiest field of application.*

The emergent genre was defined, and established its own canon.

*It spreads over the greatest mass of phenomena.*

As discussed above, LGBT fantasy colonised past, present, future, reality, and fiction.

*It itself becomes automatised and gives rise to opposing principles of construction.*

This automatisisation has taken place due to the growing presence of the normalised

LGBT character in the genre.

As for the research process itself: as shown by the methodological structure of this thesis, researching LGBT fantasy inevitably involves practising inclusion and exclusion, learning how to uncover the hidden and understanding why it has remained so until now, and interrogating the appropriateness of classification. It is, in fact, an initiatory process that requires the researcher to enact and to internalise many of the mechanisms that underlie the hidden power of queer fantasy itself. As the researcher works on the texts, through this means the texts themselves also come to work on the researcher, leading them to new modes of understanding. The evident marginalisation of these texts historically, their downplaying by reviewers, and the strange in-between state in which they exist perched between two genres ought to encourage researchers to appreciate the broader and intrinsically queer themes of liminality, marginalisation, and representation that the texts themselves contain. Even the difficulty of locating these texts encapsulates the hidden nature of queer fantasy and its inherent power and potential for transformation and subversion. As Griffith and Pagel put it in *Bending the Landscape: Fantasy*, the occurrence of the unreal in real places can be just as unexpected as “the presence of lesbian and gay characters where one has found mostly (presumed) heterosexuals” (1996, p.10).

Would-be readers of LGBT fantasy have historically been forced to locate these texts through individual journeys of discovering and uncovering: as Russ put it, “when I was sixteen (in 1953) not only was a bibliography like [*Uranian Worlds*] unthinkable, so were most of the books in it” (1989, p.xxiii). Although the overwhelming lack of reader resources and the sociocultural frameworks which discouraged this form of literature should not be over-romanticised, their limitations nonetheless allowed (or perhaps required) each reader to construct their own understanding of LGBT fantasy and their own personal canon. They could experience this literature as both hidden and forbidden and thereby invest it with part of its power and potential. One side-effect of creating a more unified canon for LGBT fantasy is that this will irreversibly shift the nature of reader experience by removing the necessity of individual canon creation. Although personal canons naturally develop for every reader, of course, future readers (it is to be hoped) will not have to reinvent the wheel. The next challenge for LGBT fantasy researchers will be examining how this genre shifts and works to retain at least some of its power and potential now that it is, at last, no longer hiding in plain sight.

The goal of this research was not to permanently fix the boundaries and meaning of the LGBT fantasy genre or nail its hidden nature to a wall, but rather to establish a number of fixed points from which webs of meaning can be constructed and upon which new perspectives can be conceived. Limitations and fixity, to a certain degree, give shape and form and meaning, even (perhaps especially) to queer genres and fantastic literatures. Imposing limitations, drawing boundaries – and defining canons – allows them to be transgressed, subverted, and queered.

In this spirit, taking the role of ‘cartographer-critic’ (Casey, 2012, p.113) for the LGBT fantasy genre allowed this thesis to stake out the rough territory of the genre, map its contents in the form of LGBT fantasy novels, and mark certain features of the landscape to be used as reference points in the future: even if, as so often happens, the reference is ‘here be dragons’.

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## Appendix A – List of Text Sources with Working Notes

### Sources Index

**A through K:** Lists from Goodreads.

**L:** Texts from the review sections of *Locus Magazine*, 1987-2000.

**M:** Independent bibliography of queer YA *sf/fantasy*.

**N:** List of GLBT *sf&f* from a New York reading group.

~~**O:** Mohanraj's list. Problematic to use. Excluded.~~

**O (reassigned):** Books pulled by Merril Collection staff.

**Pa through Pl:** Reviews from *gbltfantasy.com*, as well as texts they mean to review.

**Pm:** *eRIK's Mega list of queer sf&f*.

**Q:** *Locus Online Index of Science Fiction*. Downloaded, keyword searched.

**R:** *Shergood Forest listings*.

**S:** *Lambda Sci-Fi Recommended Reading List*.

**T:** *Gaylactic Spectrum Awards nominees*.

**U:** *Lambda Literary Awards (sf & fantasy categories)*. .

**V:** *Tiptree Award Winners*.

**W through Z:** *Science Fiction and Fantasy Book Review Annual 1988-1991*.

**NY:** *New York Pat Parker / Vito Russel Gay & Lesbian Center Library Catalogue materials*.

**•:** *Added from bibliographies or other sources later; usually sequels*.

A -

[http://www.goodreads.com/list/show/3948.Best\\_Fantasy\\_Books\\_with\\_Gay\\_Main\\_Characters](http://www.goodreads.com/list/show/3948.Best_Fantasy_Books_with_Gay_Main_Characters)

This is a list on a public website, editable by anyone, with the specific request to only add books with gay male/androgynous characters to it. It had 324 entries on 3 March 2013. Statistics on how many people voted the book onto the list are in the database entry.

I am currently not counting self-published text, including via Lulu.



B – [http://www.goodreads.com/list/show/7677.LGBT\\_sci\\_fi\\_and\\_fantasy](http://www.goodreads.com/list/show/7677.LGBT_sci_fi_and_fantasy)

As with A. This list defines itself as “Science fiction and fantasy novels which have a main character who is lgbt.” It had 353 entries on 3 March 2013. Statistics on votes are in the database entry. As before, self-published books are excluded.

C – Best LGBT Fantasy, Horror, and Science Fiction

This list had 65 entries on 18 May 2013. Details as with A and B. As implied in the name, this source comprises texts from three genres, and some genre-mixing is evident in several texts.

D – LGBT positive SFF (71 books)

‘A list of Science Fiction and Fantasy books with characters or themes that are LGBT. Preferably books that have main characters or heavy themes, not just one gay friend or one same-sex kiss. Unfortunately, I haven’t read all the books that I put on here so far. They’ve come recommended from various sources. If you feel I’ve made an error in adding any particular one of them, please let me know.’

7 August 2013.

E – YA fantasy/sf novels with major LGBTQ Characters (92 books)

‘Note: This is a list of **all** novels which fit the criteria described below. **It does not express opinions on the quality, authenticity, or positivity of the portrayals of the characters in the books. Please use your own judgment in deciding which books you wish to read or buy.**

These were the criteria used to compile the list: 1) The book must be science fiction or fantasy or otherwise not realism, and must have been published, either originally in reprint, as YA (Vanyel was never published as YA), 2) It must contain at least one major LGBTQ character who is clearly identified as such within the book itself. (Dumbledore is not; neither are Tom and Carl), 3) Major is defined as having a POV and/or a storyline of their own and/or lots of page-time. 4) In most cases, it must be published by a mainstream or small-press publisher in the USA.

I made this list because less than one percent of all YA novels published in the USA within the last ten years have any LGBTQ characters at all, even minor supporting ones. Of those few novels, most are mainstream literature, not sf or fantasy. ’

8 August 2013.

#### F – Lesbian Fantasy (30 books)

‘List of books with lesbians as main character in a fantasy world or with fantasy elements.’

8 August 2013.

#### G – Lesbian Sci-Fi (13 books)

‘List of lesbian novels in a sci-fi world or with some sci-fi elements.’

8 August 2013.

#### H – The Best LGBTQA Fantasy (55 books)

‘There’s a growing genre of ‘gay fantasy’, badly written books with an element of the supernatural, mostly revolving around ‘gay issues’. That’s not what this list is about. This is a list for well written fantasy books featuring lgbtqa characters (in other words, if the lgbtqa character is a minor one, it’s not going on this list). The books may feature homophobic societies, or they may not, but they are concerned with \*plot\*, and not the fact that some of their boys like other boys, or whatever. I hope that’s clear enough.

For the record, if Mercedes Lackey’s Herald-Mage books show up on this list, I will delete them. They are hugely problematic and I don’t think they’re that well-written anyway.’

8 August 2013. I considered Mercedes Lackey’s three Last Herald-Mage books (Magic’s Pawn, Magic’s Promise, Magic’s Price) to be implicitly included on this list.

#### I – Best Urban Fantasy with gay/glbqt characters (48 books)

'Best Urban Fantasy with a sexual minority character, including gay, lesbian, bisexual, transgendered, intersex and queer.'

11 August 2013.

Lesbian and Bisexual Women (etc) Sci Fi (65 books)

This source explicitly excludes fantasy and only focuses on sci-fi (in description) so was excluded.

J – F/F Paranormal and Urban Fantasy (134 books)

'Vote for your favorite F/F (lesbian) paranormal books. Vampires, Werewolves, Witches, Elves, Demons, Angels, etc. '

11 August 2013.

K – [http://www.goodreads.com/list/show/1907.Best\\_Gender\\_Bending\\_Books](http://www.goodreads.com/list/show/1907.Best_Gender_Bending_Books) (228 books)

'Trans, intersex, neuter, third sex, fourth/fifth/sixth sex. If it bends gender, it belongs here. '

11 August 2013.

L – This code is reserved for texts from Locus Magazine 1987-2000. Locus references will be coded with the month and year of the relevant issue: e.g. L2/96.

This source (Locus 1987-1998 inclusive) provided 88 texts initially (excluding short stories).

M – Christine A. Jenkins Young Adult Gay/Lesbian Bibliography

'This bibliography is an attempt to compile a complete list of titles (in English) with gay/lesbian content, published for young adults. The content may or may not be what

individual readers will consider positive; however, this list does give an excellent picture of the historical treatment of gay and lesbian characters in YA literature.’

Note: A text’s genre was not marked or easily identifiable (other than YA), so it was a matter of checking texts that were in the correct time period.

11 August 2013.

#### N – GLBT SF, Fantasy & Suspense Literature

List of GLBT SF&F from a New York gay and lesbian reading group that has existed since 1982 (online since 1998).

11 August 2013.

#### O – Books pulled by Merril Collection staff

#### P – GLBT Fantasy Fiction Resources | Book Reviews

Pa through Pl denote individual reviewers, Pm the list of books for possible future review compiled by Finder.

Due to miscounting, reviewer Amadis wasn’t given a code (no texts), and Pa begins with Caitlyn. Amadis has been given the code Px for completeness. [later removed, as were all for reviewers with zero texts]

September 28 2013.

#### Q – Locus Online Index of Science Fiction 1987-2000

Beginning with <http://www.locusmag.com/index/b1.htm> and proceeding through 525 such pages. This covers the period 1984-1998 (texts pre-1987 were excluded).

Continued with <http://www.locusmag.com/index/yr1999/b1.htm> and proceeding through 49 such pages in total, covering the year 1999.

Continued with <http://www.locusmag.com/index/yr2000/b1.htm> and proceeding through 49 such pages in total, covering the year 2000.

Accessed the week 7 October 2013 to 14 October 2013.

These entries in total comprised approx 2 million words, so a direct search was deemed infeasible. Instead a comprehensive keyword search was conducted:

gay

lesbian

homosexual

(homosexuality – this is subsumed into the above due to how searches work)

bisexual

queer

transgender

transgendered

transexual (this spelling of the word has become identified with a reclamation of identity)

transsexual (this spelling of the word, although historically correct, is identified with medicalisation)

trans (subsumes others – can't really be used due to transport and similar words getting in the way)

transphobic

intersex

intersexed (inappropriate term, but may have been used – subsumed by *intersex*)

hermaphrodite (massively inappropriate term outside an SFF context, but may have been used)

hermaphrodit (to allow for *hermaphroditic* and similar variants)

asexual

homoerotic

homophobic

sapphic

gender (if too many hits, shall discard)

sexuality (if too many hits, shall discard)

“his boyfriend”

“her girlfriend”

“his husband”

“her wife”

“gender transition” (remains separate from *gender* as *gender* may get too many hits)

“gender identity” (remains separate from *gender* as *gender* may get too many hits)

“sexual orientation”

“sexual identity”

“sexual preference” (I despise this phraseology, but it does occur)

LGBT

GLBT

(LGBTQ – subsumed into *LGBT* due to how searches work)

“his lover”

“her lover”

“his partner”

“her partner”

R – Shergood Forest Gay Fiction:Sci-Fi and Fantasy

<http://web.archive.org/web/20031011235009/http://shergoodforest.com/fiction/scifi.html>

Accessed on 11 October 2013.

S – Lambda Sci-Fi Recommended Reading List.

Starting here: <http://www.lambdascifi.org/books/recommend.html>

Accessed on 11 October 2013.

T – Gaylactic Spectrum Awards nominees.

Retrieved from <http://www.locusmag.com/SFAwards/Db/Spectrum2.html> on 12 October 2013.

U – Lambda Literary Awards (sf & fantasy categories).

Retrieved from <http://www.locusmag.com/SFAwards/Db/Lambda.html> on 12 October 2013.

V – Tiptree Award Winners.

Retrieved from [www.tiptree.org](http://www.tiptree.org) on 12 October 2013.

W – Science Fiction and Fantasy Book Review Annual 1988

Despite the name, this text is a compilation of reviews of books published in 1987. It claims with some justification to be a ‘comprehensive critical overview’ geared towards literary historians. It contains roughly 600 reviews of science fiction, fantasy, and horror, divided into fiction, nonfiction and young adult categories. They claim to have reviewed every ‘significant’ new title, and that according to *Locus* there were 256 original fantasy books published in 1987.

I consulted only the fiction and young adult reviews (they were not ordered by genre).

Note: Despite Ellen Kushner’s *Swordspoint* being published this year and reviewed, there is no mention of its primary gay relationship in the review.

X – Science Fiction and Fantasy Book Review Annual 1989

Five hundred reviews out of 1186 new titles (*Locus*) published in 1988, 264 of which were fantasy.

Note: The fantasy critical review section has a detailed treatment of *Swordspoint* which

again makes no mention of the book's primary gay relationship (or the many bisexual secondary characters and setting with no prejudice against same-sex relationships).

Y – Science Fiction and Fantasy Book Review Annual 1990

Note: Catherine Cooke's *Realm of the Gods* (p.240) was only identified by careful attention to pronoun use in the review.

Z – Science Fiction and Fantasy Book Review Annual 1991

This source initially provided 7 texts.

NY - New York Pat Parker / Vito Russel Gay & Lesbian Center Library Catalogue materials

Retrieved from <http://gaycenter.org/community/library> on 14 October 2013.

Catalogue categories used

- fantasy fiction
- science fiction
- fantasy
- fantasy fiction, American
- fantasy fiction (gay)
- fantastic fiction, American
- fantastic fiction

This source provided 18 texts.

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### Sources that provided no useful texts

M/M Urban Fantasy (40 books) – given no code



‘Wikipedia: Urban fantasy is a sub-genre of fantasy defined by place; the fantastic narrative has an urban setting. Many urban fantasies are set in contemporary times and contain supernatural elements. However, the stories can take place in historical, modern, or futuristic periods, as well as fictional settings. The prerequisite is that they must be primarily set in a city.

Please only add urban fantasy books, which are different from paranormal and regular fantasy.  
,

Accessed on 5 August 2013.

Zero texts found that meet my criteria. Suspect many texts from ‘Goodreads Authors’ were added by the author themselves. Suspicious number of 1-vote texts from the same author.

Books With Neuter Gender and Asexual Main Characters (14 books) – given no code

‘A list for books with neuter-gender and asexual main characters.

Please do not add books merely if they contain transgender or queer chars, but specifically they must be transitioning to/from gender neuter or passing as such, or exploring that role,  
Thankyou!’

Accessed on 7 August 2013.

Zero texts found that meet my criteria.

Alternative Sexualities and Identities in SF/F - Mohanraj

‘Alternative Sexualities and Identities in Fantasy and SF Booklist’

This is a very detailed and comprehensive list kept by Mary Anne Mohanraj, with whom I’ve corresponded. She comments (in 2006) that: ‘NOTES: Most but not all renderings of alternate sexualities and identities in these texts are positive. Not all the books listed are fantasy/sf, though the majority are. I’m especially interested in linking to listed authors’

primary web pages. If you have that information, please let me know. A shorter list of recommended titles is available from Lambda SF. I hope you find this listing useful; I'm afraid I don't really have the time to update it further at this point. '

11 August 2013.

This source proved problematic to use and was ultimately excluded.

## Appendix B – Longlist

Author	Title
Adams, Laura	Christabel
Adams, Laura	Night Vision
Adams, Laura	The Dawning
Alderman, Gill	The Archivist
Anthony, Mark	Beyond the Pale
Anthony, Mark	The Keep of Fire
Anthony, Patricia	Flanders
Anthony, Piers	3.97 Erect
Anthony, Piers	Out of Phaze
Arden, Tom	Sisterhood of the Blue Storm
Arden, Tom	Sultan of the Moon and Stars
Arden, Tom	The Harlequin's Dance
Arden, Tom	The King and Queen of Swords
Aronica, Lou & McCarthy, Shauna	Full Spectrum
Attanasio, A.A.	The Serpent and the Grail
Bailey, Robin	Brothers of the Dragon
Bailey, Robin	Flames of the Dragon
Bailey, Robin	Shadowdance
Bailey, Robin	Swords Against the Shadowlands
Bailey, Robin	Triumph of the Dragon
Baker, Sharon	Journey to Membliar
Baltuck, Naomi & Baltuck, Deborah	Keeper of the Crystal Spring
Barker, Clive	Galilee
Barker, Clive	Imajica
Barker, Clive	Sacrament
Barker, Clive	Weaveworld
Baudino, Gael	Dragon Death
Baudino, Gael	Dragonsword
Baudino, Gael	Duel of Dragons
Baudino, Gael	Gossamer Axe
Baumbach, Laura	Demon Spawn: Tales from Demon Under Glass
Bayer, Sandy	The Crystal Cage
Bayer, Sandy	The Crystal Curtain
Beaumont, Charles	Selected Stories
Beckett, Terri & Power, Chris	Tribute Trail
Beckford, William	The Episodes of Vathek
Ben Jelloun, Tahar	The Sacred Night
Ben Jelloun, Tahar	With Downcast Eyes
Bishop, Anne	Daughter of the Blood
Bishop, Michael	Unicorn Mountain
Block, Francesca Lia	Baby Be-Bop
Block, Francesca Lia	Cherokee Bat and the Goat Guys
Block, Francesca Lia	Ecstasia
Block, Francesca Lia	Girl Goddess #9
Block, Francesca Lia	I Was a Teenage Fairy

Block, Francesca Lia	Missing Angel Juan
Block, Francesca Lia	Nymph
Block, Francesca Lia	Primavera
Block, Francesca Lia	The Rose and the Beast: Fairy Tales Retold
Block, Francesca Lia	Weetzie Bat
Block, Francesca Lia	Witch Baby
Bowen, Gary	Diary of a Vampire
Bowen, Gary	Icarus and Angels
Bowen, Gary	Queer Destinies: Erotic Science Fiction Stories
Bowen, Gary	Winter of the Soul: Gay Vampire Fiction
Bowes, Richard	Minions of the Moon
Boyle, Josephine	Maiden's End
Bradley, Marion Zimmer	Red Sun of Darkover
Bradley, Marion Zimmer	Renunciates of Darkover
Bradley, Marion Zimmer	The Other Side of the Mirror
Brass, Perry	Albert, or, The Book of Man
Brass, Perry	Angel Lust
Brass, Perry	Circles
Brass, Perry	Mirage
Brass, Perry	Out There
Brenchley, Chaz	Feast of the King's Shadow
Brenchley, Chaz	Hand of the King's Evil
Brenchley, Chaz	Tower of the King's Daughter
Brite, Poppy Z	Drawing Blood
Brite, Poppy Z	Exquisite Corpse
Brite, Poppy Z	Lost Souls
Brite, Poppy Z	Plastic Jesus
Brite, Poppy Z	The Lazarus Heart
Brite, Poppy Z (ed)	Love in Vein II
Brownrigg, Elizabeth	Falling to Earth
Brownworth, Victoria & Redding, Judith	Night Shade
Brust, S. & Lindholm, M.	The Gypsy
Bruyer, Kris	Out of the Night
Bruyer, Kris	Whispers
Carroll, Jonathan	Black Cocktail
Carroll, Jonathan	Bones of the Moon
Cashorali, Peter	Fairy Tales: Traditional Stories Retold for Gay Men
Cashorali, Peter	Gay Fairy & Folk Tales: More Traditional Stories Retold for Gay Men
Cassady, Marsh	Alternate Casts
Chabon, Michael	The Amazing Adventures of Kavalier and Clay
Chalker, Jack	Changewinds #1-3
Chalker, Jack	Riders of the Winds
Chalker, Jack	Songs of the Dancing Gods
Chalker, Jack	War of the Maelstrom
Chalker, Jack	When the Changewinds Blow
Charnas, Suzy McKee	The Conqueror's Child
Charnas, Suzy McKee	The Furies

Clayton, Jo	Drum Calls
Clayton, Jo	Wild Magic
Cole, Allan	The Warrior Returns
Cole, Allan & Bunch, Chris	Kingdoms of the Night
Cole, Allan & Bunch, Chris	The Warrior's Tale
Conn, Nicole	Angel Wings: A Love Story
Constantine, Storm	Burying the Shadow
Constantine, Storm	Hermetech
Constantine, Storm	Scenting Hallowed Blood
Constantine, Storm	Sea Dragon Heir
Constantine, Storm	Stalking Tender Prey
Constantine, Storm	Stealing Sacred Fire
Constantine, Storm	The Bewitchments of Love and Hate
Constantine, Storm	The Crown of Silence
Constantine, Storm	The Enchantments of Flesh and Spirit
Constantine, Storm	The Fulfillments of Fate and Desire
Constantine, Storm	The Thorn Boy and Other Dreams of Dark Desire
Cook, Glen	Deadly Quicksilver Lies
Cooke, Catherine	Realm of the Gods
Cooke, Catherine	The Crimson Goddess
Cooke, Catherine	The Winged Assassin
Cooke, John Peyton	Out for Blood
Cooper, Fiona	A Skyhook in the Midnight Sun
Coville, Bruce	The Skull of Truth
Darling, Julia	Crocodile Soup
Datlow, Ellen & Windling, Terri (eds)	Sirens and Other Daemon Lovers
de Lint, Charles	Jack the Giant Killer
de Lint, Charles	Memory and Dream
de Lint, Charles	Trader
Delany, Samuel	(The) Mad Man
Delany, Samuel	Tales of Neveryon
Delany, Samuel	The Bridge of Lost Desire
	Desmond: A Novel about Love and the Modern Vampire
Dietz, Ulysses	The Priest: A Gothic Romance
Disch, Thomas	Black Swan
Dondhy, Farrukh	Kissing the Witch: Old Tales in New Skins
Donoghue, Emma	Black Wine
Dorsey, Candace Jane	A Captive in Time
Dreher, Sarah	Gray Magic
Dreher, Sarah	OtherWorld
Dreher, Sarah	Shaman's Moon
Dreher, Sarah	Door into Fire series
Duane, Diane	The Door into Sunset
Duane, Diane	Singling out the Couples
Duffy, Stella	Pattern Makers
Duncan, Sandy Frances	Monsieur Shoushana's Lemon Trees
Duncker, Patricia	The Gift
Edelman, Scott	Silverwolf
Edmondson, Roger	Kindred Spirits
Elliot, Jeffrey	

Fallingstar, Cerridwen	The Heart of the Fire
Feintuch, David	The Still
Fergusson, Bruce	The Shadow of His Wings
Flesh, Henry	Michael
	The Temple at Landfall / The World Celaeno
Fletcher, Jane	Chose
Flewelling, Lynn	Luck in the Shadows
Flewelling, Lynn	Stalking Darkness
Flewelling, Lynn	Traitor's Moon
Ford, Michael (ed)	Happily Ever After: Erotic Fairy Tales for Men
Ford, Michael (ed)	Once Upon a Time: Erotic Fairy Tales for Women
Forrest, Elizabeth	Phoenix Fire
Forrest, Katherine	Daughters of a Coral Dawn
Forrest, Katherine	Dreams and Swords
Fowler, Karen	The Sweetheart Season
Fox, Astrid	Rika's Jewel
Fox, Brandon	Apprenticed to Pleasure
Fox, Brandon	Conjuring the Flesh
Fox, Brandon	Sex Rites
Gadol, Peter	The Mystery Roast
Gaiman, Neil	Death: The Time of Your Life
Galford, Ellen	The Dyke and the Dybbuk
Gannett, Lewis	The Living One
Garber, DeCarnin & Paleo	Worlds Apart
Garber, Eric	Embracing the Dark
Garber, Eric & Gomez, Jewelle	Swords of the Rainbow
Garber, Eric & Paleo, Lyn	Uranian Worlds (second edition)
Glenn, Nancy Tyler	Clicking Stones
Gloss, Molly	Wild Life
Goldstein, Lisa	Strange Devices of the Sun and Moon
Gomez, Jewelle	Don't Explain
Gomez, Jewelle	The Gilda Stories
Grahn, Judy	Mundane's World
Gray, Linda	Scryer
Gray, Stephen	Born of Man
Greenwood, Ed	Elminster: The Making of a Mage
Griffith, Nicola	Slow River
Griffith, Nicola & Pagel, Stephen	Bending the Landscape: Fantasy
Grimsley, Jim	Kirith Kirin
Grundy, Stephen	Attila's Treasure
Grundy, Stephen	Gilgamesh
Gün, Güneli	On the Road to Baghdad
Hand, Elizabeth	Waking the Moon
Hartman, Keith	The Gumshoe, the Witch, and the Virtual Corpse
Hoppe, Stephanie	The Windrider
Huff, Tanya	Blood Debt
Huff, Tanya	Blood Lines
Huff, Tanya	Blood Pact
Huff, Tanya	Blood Price
Huff, Tanya	Blood Trail

Huff, Tanya	Fifth Quarter
Huff, Tanya	Gate of Darkness, Circle of Light
Huff, Tanya	No Quarter
Huff, Tanya	Sing the Four Quarters
Huff, Tanya	The Fire's Stone
Huff, Tanya	The Quartered Sea
Ings, Simon	City of the Ironfish
Jafek, Bev	The Man Who Took a Bite Out of His Wife
Jakober, Marie	The Black Chalice
Johanna, H. H.	Romancing the Dream
Jones, Gwyneth	Divine Endurance
Jones, Mary	Avalon
Kalogridis, Jeanne	Children of the Vampire
Kalogridis, Jeanne	Covenant with the Vampire
Kalogridis, Jeanne	Lord of the Vampires
Kane, Daniel	Power and Magic
Katz, Judith	Running Fiercely Toward a Thin High Sound
Kay, Guy Gavriel	The Lions of al-Rassan
Keegan, Mel	An East Wind Blowing
Keeseey, Pam	Dark Angels: Lesbian Vampire Stories
Keeseey, Pam	Daughters of Darkness
Keeseey, Pam	Women who Run with the Werewolves
Kenan, Randall	A Visitation of Spirits
Kerr, Peg	The Wild Swans
Knox, Elizabeth	The Vintner's Luck
Koja, Kathe	Strange Angels
Kushner, Ellen	Swordspoint
	Angels in America: A Gay Fantasia on National Themes
Kushner, Tony	Magic's Pawn
Lackey, Mercedes	Magic's Price
Lackey, Mercedes	Magic's Promise
Lackey, Mercedes	Storm Breaking
Lackey, Mercedes	Storm Rising
Lackey, Mercedes	Storm Warning
Lackey, Mercedes & Guon, Ellen	Knight of Ghosts and Shadows
Lai, Larissa	When Fox is a Thousand
Lansdale, Joe	Bad Chili
Lansdale, Joe	Mucho Mojo
Lansdale, Joe	The Two-Bear Mambo
Lansdale, Joe & LaBrutto, Pat	Razored Saddles
Laws, Jay	Steam
Laws, Jay	The Unfinished
Laws, Jay B.	Steam
Lee, Tanith	The Book of the Mad
Livia, Anna	Saccharin Cyanide
Lynch, Lee	Sue Slate: Private Eye
Lynn, Elizabeth	Dragon's Winter
Macer, T. P.	The Sorcerer's Web
Mains, Geoff	Gentle Warriors

Mann, William J. (ed.)	Grave Passions
Marano, Michael	Dawn Song
Marks, Laurie	Ara's Field
Marks, Laurie	Dancing Jack
Marks, Laurie	Delan the Mismaid
Marks, Laurie	The Moonbane Mage
Marley, Stephen	Shadow Sisters
Marlfin, Kyle	Carmilla: the Return
Martinac, Paula	Out of Time
Matthews, Susan	Exchange of Hostages
McDowell, Ian	Mordred's Curse
McMahan, Jeffrey	Somewhere in the Night
McMahan, Jeffrey	Vampires Anonymous
Merlis, Mark	An Arrow's Flight
Miller, Scott	In the Blood
Minns, Karen	Bloodsong
Minns, Karen	Virago
Monette, Paul	Sanctuary
More, Meredith	October Obsession
Morrison, G. & Yeowell, S.	Sebastian O
Morrow, James	Only Begotten Daughter
Morwood, Peter	The Demon Lord
Murphy, Pat	Nadya
Myers, John	Holy Family
Namjoshi, Suniti	Building Babel
Namjoshi, Suniti	St Suniti and the Dragon
Nelson, Theresa	Earthshine
Nickels, Thom	Walking Water / After All This
	Flying Cups & Saucers: Gender Explorations in Science Fiction & Fantasy
Notkin, Deborah	Dreams of Vengeance
Oakgrove, Artemis	The Raging Peace
Oakgrove, Artemis	Throne of Council
	Erotic Universe: Sexuality and Fantastic Literature
Palumbo, Donald	The Man Upstairs
Parkinson, T.L.	The Granite Shield
Patton, Fiona	The Painter Knight
Patton, Fiona	The Stone Prince
Patton, Fiona	Looking Glass Lives
Picano, Felice	The Chosen
Pinto, Ricardo	Godmother Night
Pollack, Rachel	Temporary Agency
Pollack, Rachel	Unquenchable Fire
Pollack, Rachel	Mosaic of Air
Potts, Cherry	The Heir / The King
Preston, John	The Spirit Cabinet
Quarrington, Philip	Merrick
Rice, Anne	Blood of Mugwump
Rice, Doug	In the Eyes of Mr Fury
Ridley, Philip	



Rivers, Diana	Daughters of the Great Star
Rivers, Diana	Journey to Zelindar
Rivers, Diana	The Hadra
Rivkin, J F	Silverglass
Rivkin, J F	Silverglass: Mistress of Ambiguities
Rivkin, J F	Silverglass: Web of Wind
Rivkin, J F	Silverglass: Witch of Rhostshyl
Roberts, Byrd	The Duskouri Tales
Robinson, Jane	The Amazon Chronicles
Rodi, Robert	What They Did to Princess Paragon
Roessner, Michaela	The Stars Dispose
Roessner, Michaela	The Stars Compel
Rohan, Michael Scott	Chase the Morning
Rowe, Michael	Queer Fear
	Brothers of the Night: Tales of Men, Blood and Immortality
Rowe, Michael & Roche, Thomas	Sons of Darkness: Tales of Men, Blood and Immortality
Rowe, Michael & Roche, Thomas	The Warrior Who Carried Life Was
Ryman, Geoff	A Silver Thread of Madness
Ryman, Geoff	The Disfavored Hero
Salmonson, Jessica	The Outlander: Captivity
Salmonson, Jessica	Rainbow Arc of Fire
Salterberg, B. J.	Women of Wonder
Sanchez, Gregory Earl	The Drag Queen of Elfland and Other Stories
Sargent, Pamela	Things Invisible To See: Gay and Lesbian Tales of Magic Realism
Schimel, Lawrence	Shadow Man
	Armor of Light
Schimel, Lawrence (ed)	Point of Hopes
Scott, Melissa	The Porcelain Dove
Scott, Melissa & Barnett, Lisa	Through a Brazen Mirror
Scott, Melissa & Barnett, Lisa	Dream Messenger
Sherman, Delia	Heartstone & Saber
Sherman, Delia	V is for Vampire
Shimada, Masahiko	Bizarre Dreams
Singleton, Jacqui	Meltdown!
Skal, David	Uncertain Companions
Soles & Stanislaus (eds)	Fair Peril
Soles, Caro	Larque on the Wing
Sommers, Robbi	Metal Angel
Springer, Nancy	The Fifth Sacred Thing
Springer, Nancy	Walking to Mercury
Springer, Nancy	Saber and Shadow
Starhawk	The Cage
Starhawk	MENagerie
Stirling, Stephen & Meier, Shirley	Koko
Stirling, Stephen & Meier, Shirley	Memories and Visions
Stone, Kyle	Women Who Walk Through Fire
Straub, Peter	
Sturgis, Susanna (ed)	
Sturgis, Susanna (ed)	

Tan, Cecelia (ed)	Fetish Fantastic
Tan, Cecelia (ed)	Genderflex
Tan, Cecelia (ed)	Stars Inside Her: Lesbian Erotic Fantasy
Tan, Cecelia (ed)	Tales From the Erotic Edge
Tan, Cecelia (ed)	The New Worlds of Women
Tan, Cecelia (ed)	Wired Hard
Tan, Cecelia (ed)	Wired Hard 2
	Worlds of Women: Sapphic Science Fiction
	Erotica
Tan, Cecelia (ed)	A Fall of Princes
Tarr, Judith	Arrows of the Sun
Tarr, Judith	Lord of the Two Lands
Tarr, Judith	The Hall of the Mountain King
Tepper, Sheri	Gibbon's Decline and Fall
Tepper, Sheri	Six Moon Dance
Tepper, Sheri	The Gate to Women's Country
Trevelyan, J. & Brassert, S. (eds)	The Ghost of Carmen Miranda
Turk, H.C.	Black Body
Vachss, Andrew	Choice of Evil
	The Duke Who Outlawed Jelly Beans and
	Other Stories
Valentine, Johnny & Schmidt, Lynette	The Red Sky File
Vitola, Denise	The Amber Citadel
Warrington, Freda	Bloodfang
Weaver, Michael	Nightreaver
Weaver, Michael	Wolf Dreams
Weaver, Michael	The Paladin of the Night
Weis, Margaret & Hickman, Tracy	The Prophet of Ahkran
Weis, Margaret & Hickman, Tracy	The Will of the Wanderer
Weis, Margaret & Hickman, Tracy	Second Sight
Welsh, Lindsay	Love Spell
Williams, Karen	Nightshade
Williams, Karen	Singin' the Sun Up
Wings, Ocala	Gut Symmetries
Winterson, Jeanette	Sexing the Cherry
Winterson, Jeanette	The Passion
Winterson, Jeanette	The PowerBook
Witcover, Paul	Waking Beauty
Wittig, Monique	Across the Acheron
Wood, Demon	Words in the Wind
Yolen, Jane	Briar Rose
Yolen, Jane	Sister Light, Sister Dark
Zanger, Molleen	Gardenias Where There Are None
Zapata, Luis	Adonis Garcia: A Picturesque Novel

## Appendix C – Quick Reference Table

Author	Title	Year	L	G	B	T	Q	F	M	R
Anthony, Mark	Beyond the Pale	1998		X						
Anthony, Mark	The Keep of Fire	1999		X	X				X	
Arden, Tom	The King and Queen of Swords	1998		X						
Arden, Tom	Sultan of the Moon and Stars	1999	X	X				X		
Arden, Tom	Sisterhood of the Blue Storm	2000		X		X				X
Bailey, Robin	Brothers of the Dragon	1993								
Bailey, Robin	Flames of the Dragon	1994		X	X					X
Bailey, Robin	Triumph of the Dragon	1995		X	X				X	
Bailey, Robin	Shadowdance	1996		X					X	
Barker, Clive	Imajica	1991		X	X		X		X	X
Barker, Clive	Sacrament	1996		X						
Baudino, Gael	Dragonsword	1988				X	X			
Baudino, Gael	Gossamer Axe	1990	X	X	X			X	X	
Baudino, Gael	Duel of Dragons	1991	X			X	X	X		X
Baudino, Gael	Dragon Death	1992	X			X	X	X		
Beckett, Terri & Power, Chris	Tribute Trail	1999		X	X				X	
Bishop, Michael	Unicorn Mountain	1988		X						
Block, Francesca Lia	Weetzie Bat	1989		X					X	
Block, Francesca Lia	Witch Baby	1991		X					X	
Block, Francesca Lia	Baby Be-Bop	1995		X						X
Block, Francesca Lia	I Was a Teenage Fairy	1998		X						
Brenchley, Chaz	Tower of the King's Daughter	1998		X					X	
Brenchley, Chaz	Feast of the King's Shadow	2000		X					X	
Chalker, Jack	When the Changewinds Blow	1987	X			X		X		
Chalker, Jack	Riders of the Winds	1988	X					X		
Chalker, Jack	War of the Maelstrom	1988	X					X		
Cole, Allan	The Warrior Returns	1996	X					X		
Cole, Allan & Bunch, Chris	The Warrior's Tale	1994	X					X		
Constantine, Storm	Stalking Tender Prey	1995		X	X				X	X
Constantine, Storm	Scenting Hallowed Blood	1996		X	X				X	
Constantine, Storm	Stealing Sacred Fire	1997		X					X	
Constantine, Storm	Crown of Silence	2000		X	X				X	
Cooke, Catherine	The Winged Assassin	1987		X	X				X	
Cooke, Catherine	Realm of the Gods	1988		X	X				X	
Cooke, Catherine	The Crimson Goddess	1989		X	X				X	
Dorsey, Candas Jane	Black Wine	1997	X		X			X		X
Dreher, Sarah	Gray Magic	1987	X					X		
Duane, Diane	The Door into Sunset	1993		X	X				X	X
Duffy, Stella	Singling out the Couples	1998	X	X	X			X	X	
Feintuch, David	The Still	1997		X	X				X	X
Fletcher, Jane	The World Celaeno Chose	1999	X					X		
Flewelling, Lynn	Luck in the Shadows	1996		X	X					
Flewelling, Lynn	Stalking Darkness	1997		X	X				X	
Flewelling, Lynn	Traitor's Moon	1999		X	X				X	

Author	Title	Year	L	G	B	T	Q	F	M	R
Fox, Astrid	Rika's Jewel	1999	x					x		
Fox, Brandon	Apprenticed to Pleasure	1997		x					x	
Fox, Brandon	Conjuring the Flesh	1998		x					x	
Fox, Brandon	Sex Rites	2000		x					x	
Galford, Ellen	The Dyke and the Dybbuk	1994	x					x		
	Strange Devices of the Sun and Moon									
Goldstein, Lisa		1993		x					x	
Grimsley, Jim	Kirith Kirin	2000		x					x	
Grundy, Stephan	Attila's Treasure	1996		x						
Grundy, Stephan & Grundi, Melodi	Gilgamesh	2000		x	x				x	
Gün, Güneli	On the Road to Baghdad	1991	x				x	x		
	The Gumshoe, the Witch, and the Virtual Corpse									
Hartman, Keith		1999		x			x			
	Gate of Darkness, Circle of Light									
Huff, Tanya		1989		x	x					x
Huff, Tanya	The Fire's Stone	1990		x	x				x	x
Huff, Tanya	Sing the Four Quarters	1994	x		x			x		
Huff, Tanya	Fifth Quarter	1995	x	x	x					x
Huff, Tanya	No Quarter	1996	x	x	x					x
Huff, Tanya	The Quartered Sea	1999		x	x				x	x
Ings, Simon	City of the Iron Fish	1994		x	x				x	
Jakober, Marie	The Black Chalice	2000		x						x
Jones, Mary	Avalon	1991	x					x		
Kane, Daniel	Power and Magic	1987	x	x					x	
Kerr, Peg	The Wild Swans	1999		x					x	
Kushner, Ellen	Swordspoint	1987		x	x				x	
Lackey, Mercedes	Magic's Pawn	1989		x					x	
Lackey, Mercedes	Magic's Price	1990		x					x	
Lackey, Mercedes	Magic's Promise	1990		x						
Lackey, Mercedes	Storm Warning	1994		x	x				x	
Lackey, Mercedes	Storm Rising	1995		x					x	
Lackey, Mercedes	Storm Breaking	1996		x					x	
Lackey, Mercedes & Guon, Ellen	Knight of Ghosts and Shadows	1990		x	x					x
Lai, Larissa	When Fox is a Thousand	1995	x					x		
Lynn, Elizabeth	Dragon's Winter	1998		x	x				x	
Macer, T. P.	The Sorcerer's Web	2000		x					x	x
Marks, Laurie	Dancing Jack	1993	x		x			x		
Merlis, Mark	An Arrow's Flight	1998		x					x	
Monette, Paul	Sanctuary	1997	x				x	x		
Patton, Fiona	The Stone Prince	1997		x	x				x	
Patton, Fiona	The Painter Knight	1998		x	x				x	x
Patton, Fiona	The Granite Shield	1999	x	x	x				x	x
Pinto, Ricardo	The Chosen	2000		x					x	
Pollack, Rachel	Temporary Agency	1994	x					x		
Pollack, Rachel	Godmother Night	1996	x					x		
Rivers, Diana	Journey to Zelindar	1987	x					x		
Rivers, Diana	Daughters of the Great Star	1992	x					x		
Rivers, Diana	The Hadra	1995	x					x		
Rivkin, J. F.	Web of Wind	1987	x		x			x		
Rivkin, J. F.	Witch of Rhostshyl	1989	x		x			x		
Rivkin, J. F.	Mistress of Ambiguities	1991	x	x	x			x		

Author	Title	Year	L	G	B	T	Q	F	M	R
Roessner, Michaela	The Stars Dispose	1997		x	x				x	
Roessner, Michaela	The Stars Compel	1999		x	x				x	
Scott, Melissa & Barnett, Lisa	The Armor of Light	1988		x						
Scott, Melissa & Barnett, Lisa	Point of Hopes	1995		x	x					
Sherman, Delia	Through a Brazen Mirror	1989		x						x
Singleton, Jacqui	Heartstone & Saber	1994	x				x	x		
Stirling, Stephen & Meier, Shirley	The Cage	1989	x		x			x		x
Tarr, Judith	A Fall of Princes	1988		x	x	x	x		x	x
Tarr, Judith	Arrows of the Sun	1993		x	x				x	
Weis, Margaret & Hickman, Tracy	The Paladin of the Night	1989		x						
Weis, Margaret & Hickman, Tracy	The Prophet of Ahkran	1989		x	x					
Weis, Margaret & Hickman, Tracy	The Will of the Wanderer	1989		x					x	
Williams, Karen	Love Spell	1992	x					x		
Williams, Karen	Nightshade	1996	x					x		
Winterson, Jeanette	The Passion	1987	x		x					

### *Codes – Quick Reference*

- L – Contains a primary lesbian character / character of lesbian interest.
- G – Contains a primary gay character / character of gay interest.
- B – Contains a primary bisexual character / character of bisexual interest.
- T – Contains a primary transgender character / character of transgender interest.
- Q – Contains a primary queer character not covered by the previous categories.
- F – Contains a romantic/sexual relationship between women.
- M – Contains a romantic/sexual relationship between men.
- R – Contains a queer relationship not covered by the previous categories.