

INDEPENDENT SPIRIT

Books by authors across the LGBTQ spectrum find homes at indie presses

BY NATHALIE OP DE BEECK

Mainstream publishing's LGBTQ content today resembles the transgressive indie fare of a decade ago. Poet Ocean Vuong's queer coming-of-age novel, the 2019 Penguin Press release *On Earth We're Briefly Gorgeous*, is a book club staple. Last year, MCD x FSG Originals resurrected Imogen Binnie's out-of-print *Nevada*, a 2013 novel of transgender searchers; and *Detransition, Baby* (One World) by Torrey Peters, a novel about trans- and cisgender relationships and parenthood, received a PEN/Hemingway Award.

Even as the big houses lend more support to books by queer and trans authors and with LGBTQ themes, indie publishers, with a track record of being out and proud, continue to lead the charge. *PW* spoke with editors and others in the independent publishing scene about new queer-centric imprints, international perspectives on queer identities, and the quest for previously unheard voices and unexpected stories.

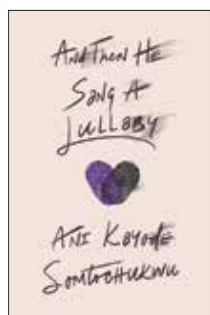
Making an impression

Grove Atlantic announced an imprint to be led by *Bad Feminist* author Roxane Gay, who identifies as queer, in 2021; Gay says it's "a lucky coincidence" that three of her first five acquisitions have distinct LGBTQ themes. The inaugural title from Roxane Gay Books, *And Then He Sang a Lullaby* (June), arrived unagented from Nigerian activist Ani Kayode Somtochukwu and centers on the relationship between a closeted track star and an openly gay student. "Kayode's book exemplifies what I want for the imprint," Gay says. "I want to take chances and encourage and engage with writers no matter where they are."

The imprint's second release, *Lush Lives* (Aug.), by art historian J. Vanessa



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Lyon, is a queer romance between an ambitious appraiser and an artist who inherits a historic Harlem brownstone, set in the cutthroat 1980s art world. "I wanted to see how the main characters would let down their guard enough to make a connection," says Gay, who believes publishers have begun "to address history and imbalances [in queer representation]. I'm hopeful it will be sustained and not just for the sake of appearances."

Mariko Tamaki, another author turned editor, likewise advances LGBTQ voices at her Abrams ComicArts imprint, Surely Books, which released its first graphic novel in 2021. Tamaki, who with her cousin Jillian Tamaki created *Skim*, *This One Summer*, and the forthcoming *Roaming* (Drawn & Quarterly, Sept.), says she is seeking queer titles that are "creator focused"—"stories that comics creators desperately want to tell, and projects we fall in love with."

She's also looking to upend the "various notions about what kinds of books equal LGBTQIA books." Recent releases range from a fictive biography of Patricia Highsmith (*Flung Out of Space*) to Frankenstein horror (*M Is for Monster*). This month brings *Grand Slam Romance, Book 1*, a dramedy by married author-illustrated team Ollie Hicks and Emma Oosterhous. This frothy tale of an irresistible softball player whose presence is kryptonite to opponents will be followed by a curveball into Revolutionary War history, *Washington's Gay General* (Aug.) by Josh Trujillo and illustrator Levi Hastings.

Resetting the margins

At the nonprofit Feminist Press, executive director Margot Atwell welcomes—and tries to stay a step ahead of—the mainstream's embrace of LGBTQ literature.



LGBTQ Voices in Publishing

Atwell sees opportunity in boosting authors of hyper-specific identities. “Even though mainstream publishers are publishing more work by Black, Indigenous, and other people of color and queer and trans voices,” she says, “folks with intersecting marginalized identities are still considered too niche. It’s hard to fit them into a clean box.”



Margot Atwell

She looks for ways to “flip the idea of niche. Specificity and authenticity are so important, and folks will take a chance on something outside of what they might normally read.”



As such, Feminist Press focuses on voice-driven narrative and bringing global work to the U.S. market. These include the collection *Happy Stories, Mostly* by Indonesian author Norman Erikson Pasaribu (trans. by Tiffany Tsao, June); biracial, nonbinary Gen Z activist Travis Alabanza’s manifesto *None of the Above* (Oct.); and *Wild Geese* (Sept.), the debut novel by trans

Irish writer Soula Emmanuel.

Queer feminist perspectives prevail at newer, smaller presses too. BLF Press, founded in 2014, amplifies queer BIPOC women, says publisher Stephanie Andrea Allen, “because regardless of what the publishing landscape looks like, very few publishers are celebrating Black queer writing.” BLF’s publications include the 2016 Black lesbian fiction collection *Lez Talk*, which Allen co-edited with Lauren Cherelle. This fall, she and Cherelle will publish *Black Joy Unbound* (Sept.), a multi-genre anthology of queer Black authors writing about “joy in times of strife.”



Stephanie Andrea Allen



Queering the story

For Catapult editor Alicia Kroell, hybrid forms and international perspectives make LGBTQ books especially exciting. “A traditional narrative might not be the best way to tell experiences,” they say. “I like seeing how authors play with form, genre, and storytelling, especially on our fiction side and our globally focused list.”



Alicia Kroell



Catapult’s forthcoming titles

include Jennifer Neal’s debut novel, *Notes on Her Color* (May), which Kroell calls “a classic story of passing, but using magical realism to actualize it for the character,” in this instance a Black, Indigenous woman who literally changes her skin color. Amelia Possanza’s *Lesbian Love Story: A Memoir in Archives* (May), which *PW*’s starred review called “an outstanding work of literary scholarship that also delivers a vulnerable, intimate portrait of its author,” considers how to find queer community by researching “people we’ve missed in the past.” Kroell is wrapping up edits on a 2024 title, Musih Tedje Xaviere’s *These Letters End in Tears*, a novel that reckons with anti-gay laws in Cameroon.

Intersectionality drives acquisitions at Red Hen Press, where a substantial LGBTQ list is complemented by the press’s annual Quill Prose Award for fiction and non-fiction by queer authors. (Quill winners receive \$1,000 and a book contract.) Artem Mozhgovoy’s *Spring in Siberia*, a 2023 release that *PW*’s review called “superb,” centers on the relationship between two boys—one the child of KGB agents—in 1985 Siberia. Alyssa Graybeal’s *Floppy* (May) chronicles the author’s diagnosis with a genetic connective tissue disorder that affects her mobility. “We’re looking at queerness and ethnicity, as well as looking for the intersections with disability and neurodivergence,” says Red Hen deputy director Tobi Harper.



Tobi Harper



Brian Lam, publisher of Vancouver, B.C.’s Arsenal Pulp Press, likewise thinks in terms of multifaceted identities. “In the early days, it was butch, femme, and those kinds of sexual identity parameters,” he says. “The last few years have opened the door wide open for trans and Indigiqueer material,” including Oji-Cree/nehiyaw two-spirit author Joshua Whitehead’s 2018 debut novel, *Jonny Appleseed*, and the 2020 anthology *Love After the End*, which Whitehead edited, as well as the speculative *Māgōdiz* (2022) by Gabe Calderón, who describes themselves as a white settler with Mi’kmaq/Anishinabe ancestry, about two-spirit people restoring a damaged world.



Brian Lam

“The audiences for queer titles have changed,” Lam says. “There’s a willingness among readers of all persuasions and identities to be reading books that have universal themes but just happen to be queer.” In *When My Ghost Sings* (Sept.), Tara Sidhoo Fraser examines how, after suffering memory loss from a stroke at age 31, she rediscovered a specifically queer sense of self. In *Transland* (Oct.), memoirist Mx. Sly navigates kink and

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Reel Visibility

PW talks with Tre'vell Anderson

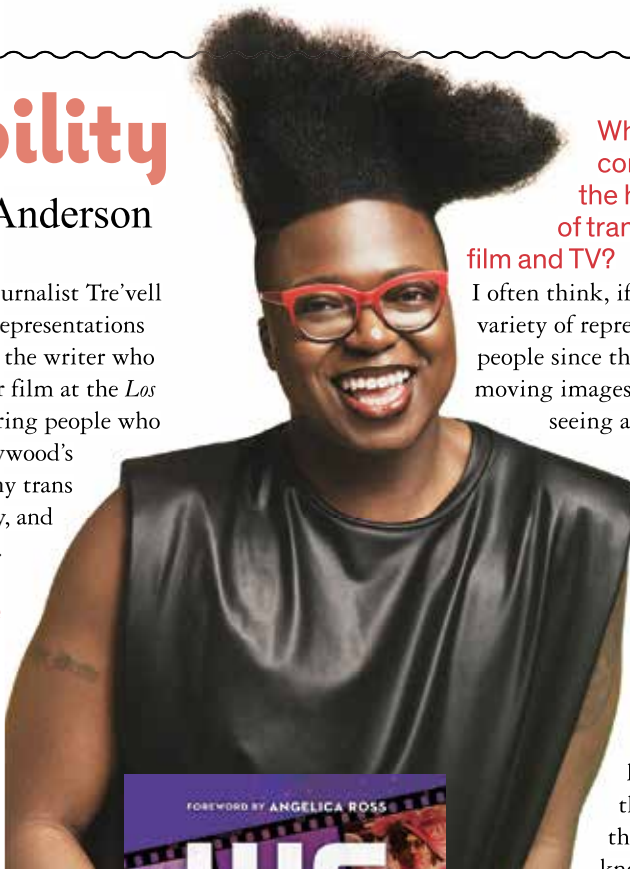
In *We See Each Other* (Andscape, May), journalist Tre'vell Anderson shines a critical spotlight on representations of trans people in movies and on TV. As the writer who fashioned a new beat on Black and queer film at the *Los Angeles Times*, Anderson is used to centering people who have historically been relegated to Hollywood's margins. They spoke with *PW* about why trans history matters, depictions that spark joy, and the unexpected affirmation of reality TV.

How did this book evolve from the one you originally envisioned?

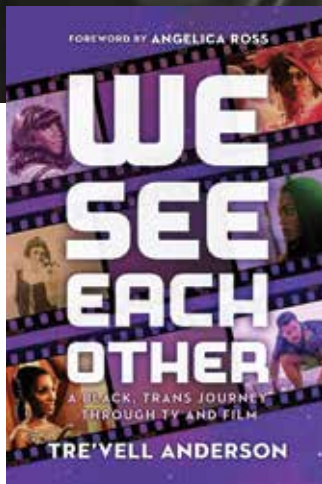
We See Each Other is an effort to share the story of how I came to be who I am in part through the images that I saw on screen. The book that we sold was a more comprehensive look at the history of trans images on screen, with a little razzle dazzle, but fewer personal elements. Ultimately, it changed in the writing. I was watching *Boys Don't Cry*, a trans film that many would see as canonical, and basically re-traumatizing myself while watching. It seemed more interesting to lean into that specificity.

Did you find yourself turning away from traumatic images?

It's not necessarily running away from or not grappling with those tough images in our history, but it's a recognition that there are so many other forms of transness and gender nonconforming aesthetics on screen. And those also deserve critique and criticism. The book addresses what could be considered canonical images of trans folks and gender expansiveness on screen, including films that contribute to anti-trans or anti-gender nonconforming or anti-gender expansiveness depictions. But one of my favorite chapters is on reality television as a space of possibility for so many trans folks when scripted portrayals failed us. I love being able to talk about Isis King on *America's Next Top Model* alongside Leiomy Maldonado on *America's Best Dance Crew*, alongside Laverne Cox on *I Want to Work for Diddy*—long before Cox's role in *Orange Is the New Black*—and charting our collective visual history in that particular way.



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What have been the consequences of the historical erasure of trans people from film and TV?

I often think, if there had been a variety of representations of trans people since the beginning of moving images, would we still be seeing and experiencing what we're seeing and experiencing? The impact is what we're living through right now: the battles we're seeing over our identities and our bodies that are happening in state legislatures across the country. That's the impact of us not knowing this history and having what is ultimately an incomplete record of what trans life looks like, what gender nonconformity looks like, in broader popular culture.

What was the first trans representation on TV or in film that made you feel joy?

I'm gonna go with this rather recent image, though I have complex feelings about it: the nonbinary character of Uncle Clifford on *P-Valley*. I love what Nicco Annan, the actor, has brought to that character, but I also note that he's a Black cis-identified gay man playing this nonbinary character, and I wish that a nonbinary person would have had that opportunity. Yet what he does with it is beautiful to me. I love the writing on that show and the ways in which Black, nonbinary, gender nonconforming-ness is being reflected in a deeply Black Southern rural community. Because we are there too—we're not just in New York, we're not just in L.A., we're also in the South. It's an obvious attempt to reflect the legitimate complexities at which Black nonbinary people and trans folks live. And it does it very well.

—Carole V. Bell

LGBTQ Voices in Publishing

continued from p. 16

fetish culture from a nonbinary perspective. Edgy titles like these are “where independent presses still can find a foothold on the market,” Lam says, “especially as queer writing becomes more normalized among the multinationals.”

Arsenal Pulp recently returned to print Casey Plett’s 2014 debut, *A Safe Girl to Love*, originally published by the now-defunct Topside Press. “Trans writers have always been part of our program,” Lam says, “and the quality of the work we’re seeing has been extraordinary. It’s a subject area where there weren’t a lot of precedents” until recently.

Plett, meanwhile, has taken on a role as publisher at LittlePuss Press, in collaboration with editor Cat Fitzpatrick, author of 2022’s *The Call-Out*. “It’s fair to say it’s a pandemic baby,” Plett says of LittlePuss, launched in winter 2020–2021. Plett and Fitzpatrick started LittlePuss after Topside folded, stranding their trans-centered SFF anthology *Meanwhile, Elsewhere*. “It won an ALA Stonewall Award,” Fitzpatrick says, “and within less than a year the book was no longer available. We started out by republishing it, and because it already existed [in a formatted, edited copy], the ramping up was easier.”

LittlePuss’s second title, *Faltas*, an epistolary collection by Argentine American activist Cecilia Gentili, won the 2023 Stonewall Award for nonfiction. (“We have two books and they both won the big gay award!” Fitzpatrick says.) LittlePuss seeks to elevate queer and trans authors, though Plett and Fitzgerald welcome submissions from writers of all identities.



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Talking gender, genre, and Gen Z

While LGBTQ voices and stories span categories, genre titles comprise a significant share of the market. Whether in romances, mysteries, thrillers, or sci-fi, queer authors and characters attract diverse audiences with inclusive scenarios.

Sourcebooks publishes queer voices across all its imprints, which include Bloom Books, Poisoned Pen Press, and Sourcebooks Casablanca. Senior editor Mary Altman strives to bring LGBTQ authors and stories on board. In years past, readers interested in LGBTQ fiction could draw upon “a rich history of romance titles in indie publishing and smaller digi-first publishing, but not a



lot had made their way through to traditional publishing,” Altman says. “Now we have the doors kicked wide open.”

A few years ago, Altman reached out to rom-com author Alexis Hall. “I’d been dying to work with him ever since he published *Glitterland*,” she recalls, and they connected “at the perfect time, as romance tipped formats from being predominantly mass market to being strongly trade paper.” Altman acquired Hall’s 2020 screwball comedy *Boyfriend Material*, swiftly followed by *Husband Material* and the forthcoming *Father Material*; another novel in the London Calling universe, *10 Things That Never Happened*, pubs in October.

Altman expects *New Adult* (Aug.) by Timothy Janovsky to appeal to the same young, queer rom-com crowd as Hall. “Speaking in broad generalities, our Gen-Z readers don’t necessarily self-identify as romance readers; they read across shelves,” she says. “There’s a willingness to let genres bleed together in ways that 10 or 15 years ago they wouldn’t have, finding young characters who are discovering the intersecting layers of their identities.”

At Kensington Publishing, another indie with a longtime LGBTQ commitment, “we launched what was called our gay and lesbian fiction program at the turn of the millennium, in the summer of 1999,” says senior communications manager Michelle Addo. “This year will be one of our biggest in queer fiction.” On the docket: Robyn Gigl’s *Remain Silent* (May), the author’s third legal thriller starring Erin McCabe, who like Gigl, is a transgender attorney. (See “Trans Formative Literature,” p. 22, for interviews with Gigl and other trans novelists.) Kensington also publishes “quozzy”—queer-cozy—mysteries including CJ Connor’s *Board to Death* (Aug.), about a Salt Lake City game store where danger is afoot, and Frank Anthony Polito’s *Rehearsed to Death* (May), a mystery about a gay Detroit couple, their home renovation show, and community theater hijinks.

“Kensington’s fiction list is built on escapist feel-good fiction, and sharing diverse voices has been a key component from the early days,” says publisher Jackie Dinas. “We want queer characters and voices in all categories—suspense, romance, cozy mystery, thriller. There’s a real hunger in the marketplace for happy fiction that shows queer people in every corner of our country.”

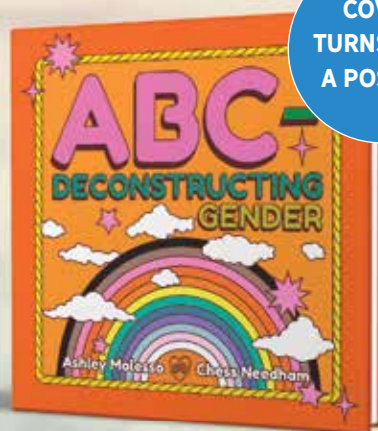
At fiction publisher Bold Strokes Books, editorial consultant Ruth Sternglantz views LGBTQ publishing as “a changing landscape. Tropes that were fresh a decade ago are now stale, and not just because of the market, but because of how queer life has changed.” Founded in 2004 by Len Barot, who writes lesbian romance under the pen name Radclyffe, Bold Strokes emphasizes

continued on p. 24

CELEBRATE PRIDE

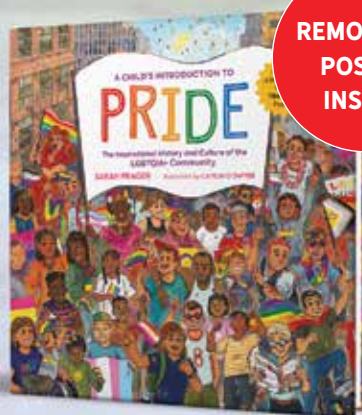
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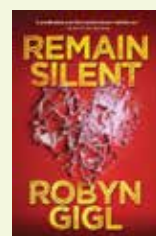
Trans Formative Literature

Transgender authors bring fresh perspectives to

The coming months see a welcome influx of trans voices to the fiction shelves, and authors are quick to point out that those voices aren't speaking in unison. "There are as many trans experiences as there are trans people," says Robyn Gigl, author of *Remain Silent* (Kensington, May). "We're human beings like anyone else, with all the same vulnerabilities and hopes. Real-life trans issues are woven into my stories, but they're just part of the characters' world like the rest of the plot." Forthcoming novels by transgender authors bring new viewpoints to a variety of genres, from a tender coming-of-age tale to surrealist horror and beyond.



Robyn Gigl



Reality bites

In *Remain Silent*, Gigl's third legal thriller starring transgender lawyer Erin McCabe, the criminal defense attorney is caught between two cases that intersect with gender identity: in one, a client is charged with abducting her transgender daughter, and in the other, McCabe herself is the prime suspect in the murder of a financial advisor who'd revealed his gender identity to her.

"There are aspects of trans characters' lives that present unique legal issues in the real world," Gigl says. "When I transpose them into a fictional setting, it's scary not just because the characters are stuck in situations they have to get out of, but because it's based on things in real life."

OKPsyche (Small Beer, Sept.), Anya Johanna DeNiro's follow-up to what *PW's* review called the "surreal and lyrical" 2020 novella *City of a Thousand Feelings*, looks at the sometimes harrowing reality of being a transgender person in a modern social setting. In a surrealistic narrative centered on an unnamed protagonist, aspects of many trans people's lived experiences—gender dysphoria, the collapse of familial relations, societal alienation—manifest as magical hallucinations that alter reality.

"Surrealism is a way to leapfrog over a cisgender audience's expectations of narrative based around trans pain," DeNiro says. "When very strange things pop up, in many ways, it's no stranger than lots of things that happened during my transition. I wanted to talk about very mundane moments—a character appraising her wig or being hyperfixated on how she's perceived by other people—through a surrealistic lens. The intersection of the political landscape and the psychological is very rich territory."



Anya Johanna DeNiro



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ture

fiction across genres

It's complicated

As more trans characters claim the spotlight, they're also finding the latitude to be as emotionally complex as their cisgender fictional counterparts. In Eliot Duncan's debut novel, *Ponyboy* (Norton, June), a transmasculine writer struggles with addiction, codependence, and alienation while negotiating a dysfunctional love triangle with Baby, a lesbian painter, and Toni, a childhood friend. As *Ponyboy's* mental health crumbles and his substance use problems become impossible to ignore, his relationships follow suit: he reaches for connection even as he tears down his support network and self-destructs.

The story is about the ways in which the process of discovering one's true self can lead to the "fissures and ruptures between people and relationships," Duncan says. "Being complicated and messed-up is part of the human experience, and it feels important to create characters who are reflective of my own lived experience. The relationships and problems that *Ponyboy* has are interesting, but they're not necessarily interesting because he's trans. It's not a spectacle—addiction recovery, for example, is a complicated and monotonous process for anyone, regardless of gender. Bad things can happen, and it doesn't make you a bad person."

Alison Rumfitt debuted in 2022 with *Tell Me I'm Worthless*, a

"triumph of transgressive queer horror," per *PW's* starred review. Her follow-up, *Brainwyrms* (Nightfire, Oct.), wraps the political and the personal in a body horror package. When trans protagonist Frankie's workplace is bombed by a transphobic terrorist and an exploitative media circus ensues, she turns to a variety of coping mechanisms, including substance use and anonymous sex. Things get even worse when she begins what Rumfitt calls a "completely destructive relationship" with the enigmatic Vanya, which allows her to explore a uniquely terrible version of herself.

"I'm interested in toxic dynamics between my characters," Rumfitt says. "Frankie is a nasty person, but she's also the audience's POV character for the majority of the novel, and readers can experience her perspective without necessarily being expected to condone or identify with it. It was great to write a character who surprised me with worse and worse things as the story progressed."

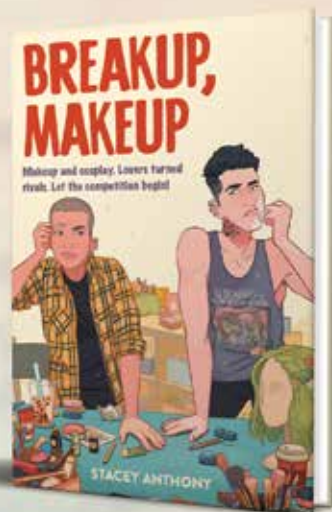
Brainwyrms builds on the sharp political subtext of *Tell Me I'm*



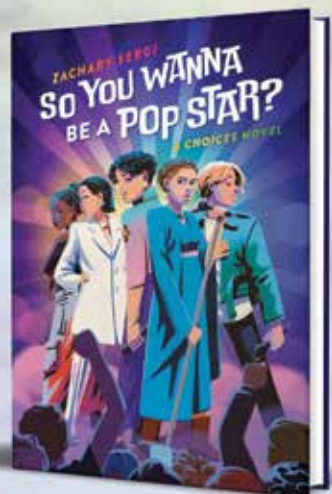
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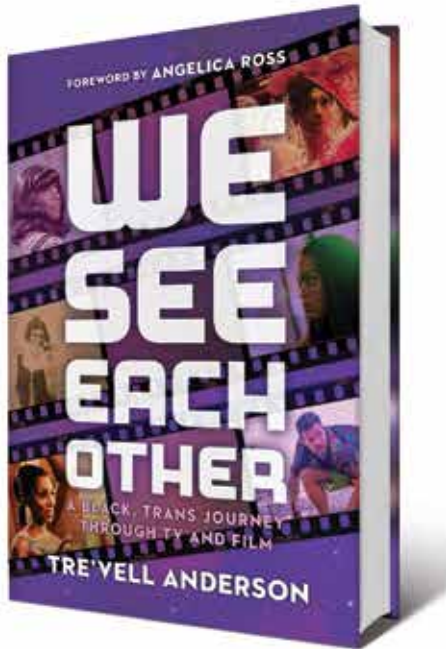
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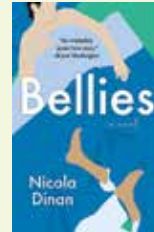
LGBTQ Voices in Publishing

continued from p. 23

Worthless, placing the story into darker and pulpier territory and making its themes more explicit. "I enjoy hitting people in the head with a sledgehammer, to some extent," Rumfitt adds. "It's fun, from a novel-writing perspective, to be crushingly on-the-nose sometimes."

From a certain point of view

Nicola Dinan's *Bellies* (Hanover Square, Aug.) follows Tom and Ming, who become college sweethearts after attending drag night at university and forming an instant bond. When the two move to London after graduation, Ming declares her intention to begin gender transition, introducing a new dynamic as they navigate post-college life as individuals and as a couple. Dinan switches



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continued from p. 20

own voices stories, Sternglantz says.

"We're looking for contemporary queer stories, evidence of a spark, and craft competence." She's looking forward to *A Calculated Risk* (Oct.), a crime thriller by U.K. paramedic Cari Hunter; *An Independent Woman* (Sept.), a polyamorous, nonbinary romance by Kit Meredith; and Aurora Rey's *Roux for Two* (May), a transgender foodie romp. Sternglantz finds that "authors themselves are reinventing what they're writing," with daring representations of gender and sexuality.

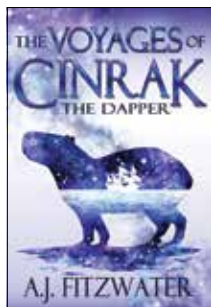
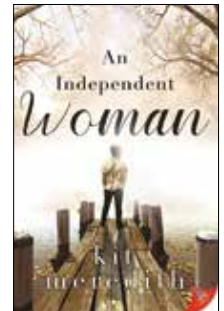


Ruth Sternglantz



Catherine Lundoff

Catherine Lundoff thinks along similar lines. She founded Queen of Swords Press in 2017 and is down for fantasy and lesbian swashbuckling, even though, she says, "when I open for submissions, I don't get as many babes-with-blades stories as I'd like." She takes chances on unusual work like New Zealand author A.J. Fitzwater's *The Adventures of Cinrak the Dapper*, about a lesbian capybara (Lundoff calls *Cinrak* "our best all-ages title, very trans affirming, with a nice environmental message and animals solving problems"). This year, Queen of Swords is releasing new editions of Melissa Scott and Amy Griswold's fantasy-mystery duology, originally published by Lethe Press in 2013 and 2014: the Lambda-winning *Death by Silver* (out now) and its sequel, *A Death at the Dionysus Club* (Dec.).



We're here, at last

Android Press stands at a crossroads of queer voices, SFF, and horror, with a forthcoming list that represents queer writing from the African continent. Among its offerings are Nigerian author Dare Segun Falowo's *Caged Ocean Dub: Glints and Stories* (June), which *PW's* review called a "transporting debut collection," and South African author Xan Van Rooyen's cyberpunk-aetherpunk novel *Silver Helix* (Sept.).

"As a trans person, I want to tell stories that highlight queerness and transness," says Justine Norton-Kertson, who founded the press in 2021 with the goal of expressing "radical hope" in solarpunk and cyberpunk titles. "Queer folks have lived as a marginalized population for so long that our whole lives have been speculative,

LGBTQ Voices in Publishing

narrative points of view between Tom and Ming, giving the reader a multifaceted perspective on Ming's transition process.

"I wanted to write the story of someone's transition through the lens of relationships," Dinan says. "What does it mean to be on the outside of someone else's change? So much about how we present ourselves, and how we think of ourselves as people, has an inherent relation to gender. It felt necessary to offer both Tom's and Ming's perspectives and craft two voices that sound distinct and have different mindsets, even though they share so much between them."

Dinan, like other authors interviewed for this piece, believes in the importance of multiple perspectives in telling a fuller and more nuanced story.

"It would have been more difficult to write the book from only one point of view, because I never would have gotten the full story that way."

—LILLIAN BOYD



Justine Norton-Kertson

dreaming about how things could be different."

In Hamilton, Ont., three-year-old Stelliform Press likewise publishes speculative fiction, with a focus on climate and on historically marginalized identities. Stelliform publisher and editor-in-chief Selena Middleton explains that "queer voices are part of our mission to amplify the voices of people who are not part of a dominant culture, and to imagine how different intersectionalities are impacted by climate pressures." She leans toward community-oriented stories, avoiding despair: "Our stories respond to climate in a way that is generative rather than nihilistic." Forthcoming Stelliform titles include E.G. Condé's *Sordidez* (Aug.), set in Puerto Rico and the Yucatán, and the eco-horror novella *Green Fuse Burning* (Oct.) by Mi'kmaw author Tiffany Morris.



Selena Middleton

That search for community, found family, and future potential resonates with LGBTQ-focused indie publishers, who don't shy away from anthologies that unite authors around identity. Neon Hemlock's annual *We're Here* volume of queer speculative short fiction echoes the "we're here, we're queer" Pride shout; the next volume, edited by Naomi Kanakia and Charles Payseur, pubs in September. Global voices shine at the four-year-old publisher, among them Indo-Caribbean author Premeé Mohamed, whose *And What Can We Offer You Tonight* won the 2022 Nebula and World Fantasy Award for Best Novella, and Afrofuturist visionary Shingai Njeri Kagunda, whose novel *& This Is How to Stay Alive* concerns Kenyan identity and time travel. Neon Hemlock publisher dave ring says the press, which launched in 2019, focuses "on acquiring boundary-breaking queer novellas that might be



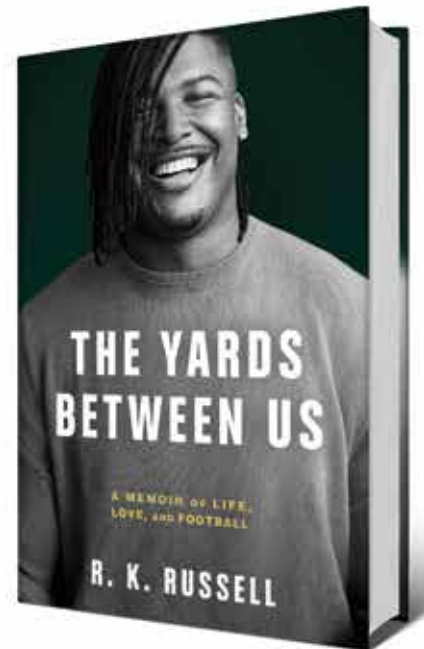
dave ring

difficult to find a home for at mainstream presses while creating space for nuanced writing, queer and otherwise, that tells underheard stories."

As with others *PW* spoke with, ring emphasizes the importance of acknowledging characteristics beyond gender and sexuality. "People move through the world based on not only their queerness but with all aspects of their identity," ring says. "Part of the role of small presses is pushing back against the idea of monolithic identities and showing the breadth of what these experiences can look like." ■

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20 Essential Queer Comics from the Past Five Years

BY MARINAOMI

MariNaomi is an Eisner Award–nominated and SPACE Award–winning cartoonist and the founder and administrator of the *Cartoonists of Color*, *Queer Cartoonists*, and *Disabled Cartoonists* databases. Their graphic novel *Losing the Girl* was among those banned in the Katy, Tex., school district in 2022. In May, Fieldmouse Press will publish their ninth book, the graphic memoir *I Thought You Loved Me*.



These books contain a variety of subjects, themes, moods, and styles, all queer books by queer authors. I've mixed it up in order to give an idea of how diverse queer comics can be, through my particular lens—my tastes skew toward mature personal narratives and indie artwork. It is in no way a complete list, just a taste.

1. **1001 Black Men** by Ajuan Mance (*Stacked Deck*)

Mance's book is a love letter to the Black men she deems as often overlooked by traditional media. Sometimes stories or poems accompany the portraits, sometimes the images speak for themselves.

2. **Are You Listening?** by Tillie Walden (*First Second*)

This dreamlike graphic novel, set in a magical version of West Texas, captures the budding friendship of a baby queer and an older lesbian. It shows us an emotional mentorship rarely seen, but one that is quite common among folks who are accustomed to seeking out chosen family.

3. **Be Gay, Do Comics**, edited by Matt Bors (*IDW*)

These comics originally appeared on the website *The Nib* and range from personal to historical, with an emphasis on narratives about feeling like the odd person out. The contributors are a veritable “who's who” of contemporary cartoonists.

4. **Blackward** by Lawrence Lindell (*Drawn & Quarterly*)

Lindell's story, about a ragtag group of friends trying to build community, is due out in September. It's charming, joyful, and best of all, entertaining.

5. **Fungirl** by Elizabeth Pich (*Silver Sprocket*)

Fungirl is a walking id—your lovable, horrible, gross, sexy, charming ex who you can't seem to get rid of. One of the most funbooks I've come across in some time.

6. **Gender Queer** by Maia Kobabe (*Oni*)

Kobabe's memoir about eir journey to define eir own gender is the most banned book of recent years. Enough said.

7. **I'm a Wild Seed** by Sharon Lee De La Cruz (*Street Noise*)

In this memoir, the author comes to terms with her sexuality with little fanfare. Despite its brevity, De La Cruz packs in a lot of information—from an explainer on intersectional feminism to the reasons why protecting Black trans lives is essential to preserving the safety of all marginalized groups.

8. **Klaus Nomi: A Graphic Biography and Collaborative Anthology** by Liz Yerby et al. (*Sound Grounds Wreckin' Crew*)

New wave icon Klaus Nomi had an influential career that was cut short when he was one of the first celebrities to die of AIDS. Yerby collaborates with some phenomenal up-and-coming artists to create this stunning biography.

9. **Laura Dean Keeps Breaking Up with Me** by Mariko Tamaki, illus. by Rosemary Valero-O'Connell (*First Second*)

This beautiful YA graphic novel is a story about being strung along romantically and the friendships that can suffer because of it. The characters are relatably flawed.

10. **The Magic Fish** by Trung Le Nguyen (*Random House Graphic*)

This tale of a Vietnamese American boy's coming-out is told masterfully through gorgeously rendered fables. I make everyone read this book.

11. **Marry Me a Little** by Rob Kirby (*Graphic Mundi*)

Comics legend Kirby investigates his lifelong apathy toward marriage (all while he plans for his own wedding) and delves into the history of same-sex marriage in America.

12. **Men I Trust** by Tommi Parrish (*Fantagraphics*)

This is about the complicated friendship between a struggling poet and her adoring fan. Each page is a masterpiece.

13. **Messy Roots** by Laura Gao (*HarperCollins/Balzer + Bray*)

Gao, originally from Wuhan, China, writes about growing up in the U.S. as a queer woman and the unpleasant attitude they experi-

LGBTQ Voices in Publishing

enced from white Americans as the Covid-19 pandemic unfolded.

14. *Our Wretched Town Hall* by Eric Kostiuk Williams
(Retrofit Comics)

Williams's comics feel like being slapped gently awake by the most luminous of drag queens. This collection does not disappoint.

15. *The Secret to Superhuman Strength* by Alison Bechdel
(Mariner)

Bechdel documents her lifelong pursuit of physical endurance in order to bring the reader into her hyper-cerebral worldview. This is the masterpiece she came up with using her MacArthur grant—a worthy expenditure.

16. *Smahtguy* by Eric Orner (Metropolitan)

A graphic biography about the notorious congressman Barney Frank and his tormented, colorful path to unwittingly becoming a politician. Orner tells the story with frankness, wit, and compassion.

17. *Squad* by Maggie Tokuda-Hall, illus. by Lisa Sterle
(Greenwillow)

In this YA graphic novel, a group of high school it-girls bring

the new girl into their werewolf pack, wherein they troll full-moon parties eating sex pests. I laughed, I cried, I laughed again.

18. *Stone Fruit* by Lee Lai (Fantagraphics)

A trans woman's complicated relationships—with herself, her family, and her girlfriend—are rendered in linework so beautiful I had difficulty looking away. Lee's exploration of boundaries really stuck with me.

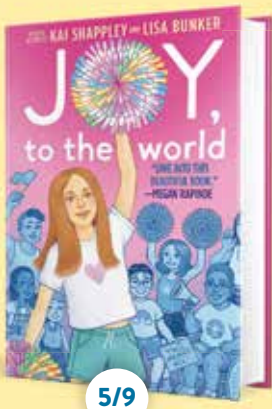
19. *The Third Person* by Emma Grove (Drawn & Quarterly)

Grove details her meetings with her therapists as she sought out gender-affirming surgery, and the bumps in the road she was unprepared for. This nearly 900-page memoir is a riveting mystery that, despite its heft, goes by super quickly.

20. *To Whoever Even Listen* by Michiko Wild, with Lulu and Michiyo Gargiulo (self-published)

Wild teams up with their mother and aunt and draws on old letters and medical records to tell the story of their grandmother, Michiyo. Michiyo's mental illness ties their lives together and paints a picture of generational trauma and displacement, as well as warmth, love, and patience. It's a truly stellar debut. ■

Be **LOUD** and **PROUD** for **PRIDE MONTH**—
Get ready **HERE!**



SCAN TO STOCK YOUR SHELVES!



LGBTQ Chorus

Forthcoming books for adults highlight an array of queer experiences through memoir, history, and fiction that conveys larger truths.

Fair Play

Katie Barnes. *St. Martin's, Sept.*

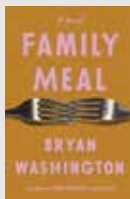
Three-time GLAAD Award nominee Barnes covers the intersection of sports and gender for ESPN. Their debut expands on their reporting by tracing the history of women's sports from the passage of Title IX to the present-day controversy surrounding trans athletes, which calls into question the rules surrounding the separation of sports competition by sex.



Family Meal

Bryan Washington. *Riverhead, Oct.*

Washington, a Lambda Literary Award winner and National Book Foundation 5 under 35 honoree, explores grief, estrangement, addiction, and friendship in his latest. The novel follows two young gay men—Cam, who returns to Houston after the death of his partner Kai, and TJ, Cam's childhood best friend—as they struggle to regain each other's trust and heal.



The Gulf

Rachel Cochran. *Harper, June*

Set in a small, religious town on the gulf coast of Texas in the 1970s, this debut literary thriller revolves around secrets and forbidden love. Lou, a closeted 29-year-old woman, is grieving her brother's death in the Vietnam War when the elderly surrogate mother whose house she's renovating is murdered. When the woman's daughter—Lou's first love—returns to take over the house, the town's dark history comes to light.



Horse Barbie

Geena Rocero. *Dial, May*

As a teen in the 1990s, trans activist and filmmaker Rocero competed in popular Filipino trans beauty pageants where her competitors called her a "horse Barbie" because of her height and ponytail. Her memoir reclaims the taunt as she tells her story of moving from Miss Gay Universe in the Philippines to a closeted model in New York before recovering her sense of self.



Leg: The Story of a Limb and the Boy Who Grew From It

Greg Marshall. *Abrams, June*

Marshall traces his experience coming out of two closets—first as gay, and much later, as having cerebral palsy—in this comedic memoir. Growing up, Marshall's parents told him his limp was caused by "tight tendons"; he didn't learn about his actual diagnosis until he was almost 30. Amid stories of serving as inspirational fodder for his mom's weekly newspaper column and crushing on Utah Jazz players, Marshall comes to terms with his disability.



Let's Go Let's Go Let's Go

Cleo Qian. *Tin House, Aug.*

This debut collection of speculative short stories by Pushcart nominee Qian focuses on Asian and Asian American female characters who grapple with unmet queer desire and the ways technology interferes in their lives. What unites the 11 stories, which travel from L.A. to the virtual world of a dating simulation app to China and Japan, is the characters' yearning for their lives to change.



Mrs. S

K Patrick. *Europa, June*

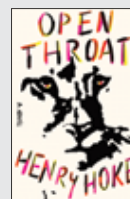
The narrator of Patrick's debut is a butch Australian woman who has started a new job as the matron of an elite English boarding school for girls. Over the course of a summer, she navigates her desire for the eponymous headmaster's wife. "Patrick wrings the exotic world of privilege for all that it's worth," per *PW's* review.



Open Throat

Henry Hoke. *MCD, June*

Hoke follows his 2022 memoir, *Sticker*, with an experimental novel that gives voice to a queer mountain lion in Los Angeles as they seek to sate their hunger. "The economical prose reads like poetry, with enjambment in place of punctuation and frequent paragraph breaks," according to *PW's* review. "By turns funny and melancholy, this is a thrilling portrait of alienation."



A Part of the Heart Can't Be Eaten

Tristan Taormino. *Duke Univ., Sept.*

Sex educator and Lambda Literary Award-winning anthology editor Taormino's memoir recounts her upbringing split between her single mother's home on Long Island during the school year and summers in Provincetown, Mass., with her father, who came out as gay in the 1970s. She traces her coming-of-age,



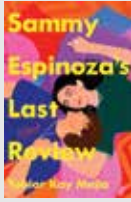
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her grief over losing her father to AIDS in the 1990s, and the early days of her career in the queer sexual subculture.

Sammy Espinoza's Last Review

Tehlor Kay Mejia. Dell, July

The middle grade and YA author, whose most recent book is the YA fantasy *Lucha of the Night Forest*, makes her adult debut with a bisexual rom-com. Music critic Sammy's career is in peril after she used her column to try to save her doomed relationship with an "indie-rock goddess." In the breakup's aftermath, she returns to her hometown and reconnects with her teenage crush, a rock star named Max who is rumored to be releasing a solo album.



The Splinter in the Sky

Kemi Ashing-Giwa. Saga, July

Stanford paleobiology PhD student Ashing-Giwa debuts with a space opera set on the planet Gondwana, which is experiencing a fragile peace. The story centers on Enitan, a tea specialist and scribe who lives in a colonized province. With her lover Ajana assassinated by



imperial agents and her nonbinary older sibling kidnapped, Enitan embarks on a rescue mission.

Survival Takes a Wild Imagination

Fariha Roisín. Andrews McMeel, Oct.

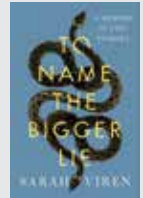
Roisín, a queer Bangladeshi Muslim, returns to poetry after her 2020 novel, *Like a Bird*, and her 2022 nonfiction title, *Who Is Wellness For?*. Her new collection takes a hopeful approach to topics including generational trauma, self-love, and freedom, while also exploring her intersecting identities.



To Name the Bigger Lie

Sarah Viren. Scribner, June

Viren had intended to focus this memoir on her high school philosophy teacher, a man who taught his students to question everything and dabbled in conspiracy theories. She wanted to ruminate on truth and lies, and who can be hoodwinked. Then, her wife—like her, a professor—was falsely accused of sexual misconduct, derailing Viren's reality and complicating her project. *PW's* starred review called it "breathtaking stuff."



continued on p. 30

Publishing Books with Pride



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A Journey of Self (and Sexual) Discovery

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Monica Gupta Mehta and Ash Mehta

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continued from p. 29

We Set the Night on Fire

Martha Shelley. *Chicago Review*, June
Cofounder of the Gay Liberation Front Shelley explores her life in activism in this memoir. Raised during the McCarthy era in New York City, Shelley came out as a lesbian in the 1960s, when doing so was illegal. She writes of becoming a public speaker for the Daughters of Bilitis, the first lesbian rights group in the U.S., and later organizing the first gay march in response to Stonewall, and taking part in the Lavender Menace group.



With Bloom upon Them and Also with Blood

Justin Phillip Reed. *Coffee House*, Oct.
Reed won a National Book Award and a Lambda Literary Award for his 2018 poetry collection *Indecency*. His latest melds poetry and essays to explore his encounters with horror cinema and cultural iconography as a queer Black Southerner in gore-filled meditations on alienation, perversion, and disillusionment.



—Kristen Martin

LET THE RIGHT ONES IN

Queer heroes battle demons and save the day in new middle grade and YA books

BY LIZ SCHEIER

Horror fiction contains multitudes, from giddy slasher romps to incisive social commentary. Author Ryan La Sala sees the genre as the perfect outlet for young queer anxiety. His books include 2022's *The Honeys*, which *PW*'s starred review praised for its “deliciously creepy horror scenes,” and the forthcoming YA novel *Beholder* (Push, Oct.), in which teenage Athan emerges from a swanky penthouse party to find the other guests slaughtered and their bodies arranged into an intricate sculpture.

“Queer horror is the definitive horror,” La Sala says. “Monsters that pop up in these stories aren’t mummies wrapped in rotting cloth; they’re other people making split decisions about queer people and their humanity.”

Gigi Griffis, whose YA debut, *The Wicked Unseen* (Underlined, June), draws on the Satanic Panic of the 1990s, roots her fictional tensions in all-too-real homophobia and trans-



phobia. “When you’re writing as a marginalized author from any sort of background, you’re picking apart your own feelings about a world that’s been horrifying to you at some point,” she says. “This lets you go into darker things, give characters hope and agency, and unpack difficult things in a way that’s entertaining and safe to explore.”

PW spoke with La Sala, Griffis, and other queer authors of children’s and YA horror fiction about the importance of positive LGBTQ representation in a genre that has historically fed its queer characters to the creatures under the stairs.

Don’t go in the basement (or the closet)

“Being a teenager is hard in general,” Griffis says. “You don’t have your own agency; you’re beholden to adults around you. As a queer kid, you also have to be careful about showing who you are. I want to show queer kids the power they do have.”

Horror is a safe way for young readers to explore the terrors of their daily lives, according to several authors who spoke with *PW*. In Alex Crespo’s debut, *Saint Juniper’s Folly* (Peachtree Teen, June), which he calls a “queer haunted house novel,” three teenagers wrestle with their inner demons and outer ghosts. “I love that speculative fiction can give you the space to play with a lot

LGBTQ Voices in Publishing



of negative emotions,” Crespo says. “A character is 17 or 18 and feels incredibly stuck, and you can dial that emotion up to a thousand using scary elements to dig into the feelings around coming out.”



Themes of social isolation, the weight of past trauma, and the horror of being trapped in an unwanted form pervade *Deephaven* (Quill Tree, Sept.), a middle grade gothic and the prose debut of graphic novelist Ethan M. Aldridge. Protagonist Nev, who is nonbinary, enrolls in a secretive and secluded boarding school; weighty undertones notwithstanding, Aldridge’s goal is to engage young readers. “It can be hard to be a queer kid,” the author says, “and when you go to read, you want escapism, not a social studies lecture.” Still, Aldridge acknowledges the many emotional needs the

genre can fill. “Kids live in a world with a lot of anxiety—climate, guns, etc.,” he says. “With horror, there’s a specific monster or supernatural dread that can be outwitted or escaped. It’s a healthy release.”

YA fantasy author Kalynn Bayron made her middle grade debut with 2022’s *The Vanquishers* (Bloomsbury), “a fresh take

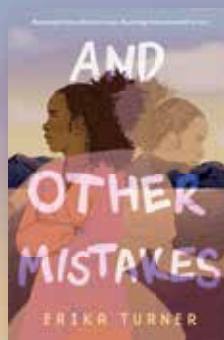


on vampire lore,” per *PW*’s review, about a squad of sixth graders who face off against the undead. Before the sequel, *Secret of the Reaping*, pubs in October, Bayron returns to YA with the slasher *You’re Not Supposed to Die Tonight* (Bloomsbury, June). When Charity Curtis takes a summer job as a “final girl” in a full-contact game at Camp Mirror Lake, her coworkers begin disappearing one by one, and she and her girlfriend find

themselves in real-life peril.

“I create work through a lens that is queer-normative,” Bayron says. “There’s a double whammy in horror—Black or queer characters get killed off first. What does it mean to be queer and Black and survive?”

Can't-Miss YA Reads for Pride Month and Beyond!



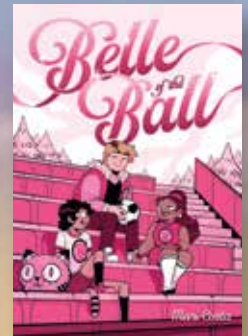
★**“Genuine and honest.”**

—Publishers Weekly, starred review



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—Jason June, *New York Times* bestselling author of *Jay’s Gay Agenda*



★**“Refreshing.”**

—Publishers Weekly, starred review



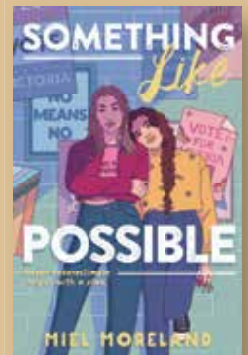
★**“Deliciously funny.”**

—Julian Winters, award-winning author of *Running with Lions*



★**“An atmospheric, eerie retelling.”**

—BuzzFeed

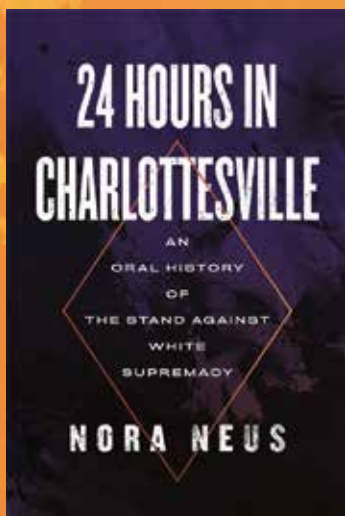


★**“Beautifully righteous.”**

—Edward Underhill, author of *Always the Almost*

INSIDE STORIES FROM JOURNALISTS ON THE FRONTLINES

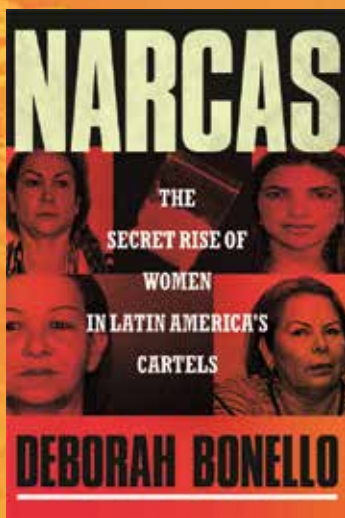
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—MELISSA DEL BOSQUE,
author of *Bloodlines*

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Reading of the bans

Bayron's question resonates with particular urgency as states, school systems, and increasingly vocal individuals amp up their offensives against books with queer content.

"Queer kids nowadays are enduring more attacks than they're even aware of, as books are being banned and narratives contested," La Sala says. "I don't think anyone 'just happens to be' queer. Queerness is reflected through the many decisions a character has to make. It's important that these characters make it into the world, so kids see a future for themselves—that they see people like them go on to battle and thrive."

Kosoko Jackson has written queer characters in an array of genres—dystopian YA, adult rom-com, time-travel YA. The hero of his next YA novel, *The Forest Demands Its Due* (Quill Tree, Oct.), is a queer Black teen who awakens a centuries-old horror outside his elite boarding school. "We need blatantly queer books: it's a statement and act of resilience," Jackson says. "But being able to carry that around in your school and town is a privilege not everyone has."

In the forthcoming YA horror thriller *Your Lonely Nights Are Over* (Viking, Sept.), Adam Sass makes the threat overt: a serial killer targets a high school Queer Club. Sass, who describes his novel as "Scream meets *Clueless* and it's gay," sees representation as filling a ground-level need at a difficult time. "We're seeing more and more bans and don't-say-gay bills, active organized efforts to erase us out of existence," he says. "Minimally, we need to make sure people know we exist."

Even in the current climate, Sass says that horror fans may be the ideal readers for books with diverse representation—open-minded, always looking for fresh stories. "Horror fans will read outside just their favorite author; they're adventurous, they'll try new voices. And you can sneak in a lot more queerness—a cis straight reader might not pick up a gay rom-com but will pick up a cool splatter book with queerness in it. People give us a chance a little bit more."

Justine Pucella Winans, whose middle grade horror adventure *The Otherwoods* (Bloomsbury, Sept.) features a nonbinary hero with the ability to see monsters, thinks the anti-queer legislation may be a reason some readers are turning to horror fiction. "There's something about horror and thrillers that's very cathartic," they say. "You have these queer characters facing monsters, and now more of them are making it out alive."

Here to slay

When YA author Erica Waters was growing up in rural Florida, the situation was different: there was no queer lit in either the school or public libraries and, she says, "the dominant narrative was that to be gay was to be broken and sad." Today, she writes horror and dark fantasy novels tinged with queer romance and recalls an email she received from one teen fan who'd been overjoyed to find her books. All the queer titles had been removed from their local library, they wrote, but Waters's novels had survived the cull. Her books "weren't aggressively marketed" as queer, the author explains; "I like that my books can fly under the radar." In her latest, *All That Consumes Us* (HarperTeen, Oct.), Tara, a queer college student, enrolls in an elite academic society that harbors a dark secret. Even as things turn night-



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marish, romance blossoms with a sweet, smart classmate named Penny.

Many authors interviewed for this article could still name the first queer book they found in the library and spoke with love and longing about seeing themselves—even a self they might not yet have fully accepted or understood—reflected in books. “I read scads and scads of science fiction adventures, and if there was even a whisper of a queer relationship, I read it,” says Kate Alice Marshall, whose next YA novel, *The Narrow* (Viking, Aug.), is set at a haunted boarding school where Eden, who is queer, falls for the mysterious Delphine. “There was so little out there. I was so hungry to find that.”



Andrew Joseph White says that when he was a teenager in the 2010s, he knew of almost no books with trans protagonists. “I had my first gender crisis at 16, but I bottled it up for three years,” he says. “If I’d been exposed to what a trans man was, it would have been so much easier.”



His next YA novel, *The Spirit Bares Its Teeth* (Peachtree Teen, Sept.), follows 16-year-old Silas Bell, an autistic trans boy plagued by talkative ghosts in 1883 London. “My books aren’t solely about the main character being trans, but if you remove that element, the book would be destroyed. Silas goes to a cruel boarding school and discovers ghosts of dead students are trying to get his attention, but it all collapses if you don’t know he’s being brutalized for being trans.”



Debut author Alex Brown takes a more lighthearted approach in *Damned if You Do* (Page Street Kids, Aug.), which meshes a horror comedy with Filipino folklore. “As a kid, if you don’t see your identity represented, you feel that you’re not worth being in a story, your story doesn’t matter,” she says.

Brown is also the coeditor, with Shelly Page, of *Night of the Living Queers* (Wednesday, Aug.), a YA horror anthology with stories by 13 authors of color, including Page and Brown.

“All my narrators are queer, biracial, kind of a mess, trying to figure things out,” Brown says. Along with other authors interviewed for this piece, she sees her work as having a positive impact beyond its entertainment value: “I write with the hope that if I can help one or two kids feel seen, like I didn’t, that’ll be worth it.” ■

Liz Scheier is a writer, editor, and product strategist living in Washington, D.C. She is the author of the memoir Never Simple.

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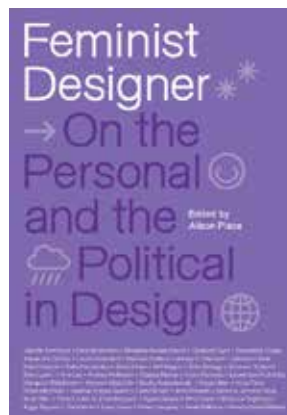
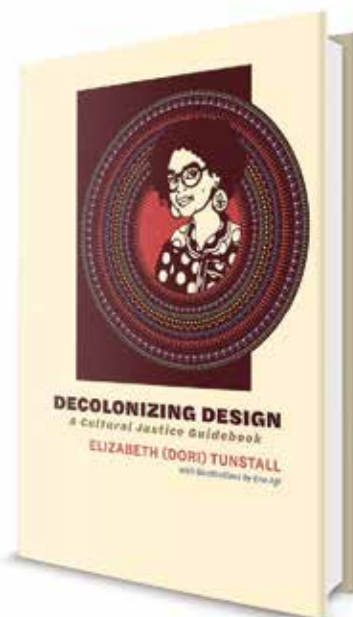
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Pride and Joy

Picture books, middle grade and YA fiction, and graphic novels aim to entertain while encouraging children and teens to embrace their identities

Alex Wise vs. the End of the World

Terry J. Benton-Walker. *Labyrinth Road*, Sept. Ages 8–12

Benton-Walker debuted earlier this year with the YA contemporary fantasy *Blood Debts*, which received a starred review from *PW*. His forthcoming middle grade series launch follows Alex, a 12-year-old queer Black boy who spends his summer vacation battling the four horsemen of the apocalypse while grappling with his parents' divorce and his feelings for a former friend.



Charming Young Man

Eliot Schreier. *HarperCollins/Tegen*, Oct. Ages 13 and up

Two-time National Book Award finalist Schreier's historical YA reimagines the relationship between pianist Léon Delafosse and Marcel Proust. Set in 1890s Paris, this coming-of-age story follows a 16-year-old Léon as he and Marcel, a young gossip columnist, make their entrance into high society and explore their sexuality.



Confetti Realms

Nadia Shammas, *illus. by Karnessa*. *Mad Cave*, Oct. Ages 13–17

In this graphic novel, a diverse group of teens visit a graveyard to summon a ghost on Halloween night, only to encounter a sentient puppet who sends them to an alternate dimension—the Confetti Realms. There, they must collect teeth as a debt to the puppet while solving problems within their friend group. Shammas won a Harvey Award for 2022's *Squire*, which received a starred review from *PW*.



Constellations

Kate Glasheen. *Holiday House*, May. Ages 14 and up

Set in 1980s Troy, N.Y., this watercolor-and-ink graphic novel follows Claire, a teenager who struggles with their gender identity, alcohol dependency, and bullying at school, ending up in a court-ordered recovery program. Per *PW*'s starred review, "This solo debut—a fictionalized, somewhat autobiographical accounting, as indicated in an author's note—explores its protagonist's struggles to be a part of their family and community while learning to accept themselves, potently reflecting on themes



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of addiction, healing, and identity.”

Ellie Engel Saves Herself

Leah Johnson. Disney-Hyperion, May. Ages 8–12

YA author Johnson’s foray into middle grade centers on Ellie, a quiet and anxious Black middle schooler who discovers that her touch can bring dead organisms back to life. As she reckons with her new power, she also contends with her feelings for her best friend, Abby.



“Marrying her customary openhearted style with a necromancy-oriented origin story, Johnson tackles the pains of growing up—changing bodies, shifting bonds, early crushes, and defining oneself on one’s own terms,” according to PW’s starred review.

The Evolving Truth of Ever-Stronger Will

Maya MacGregor. Astra, Oct. Ages 12 and up

MacGregor’s second YA novel, after the PW-starred *The Many Half-Lived Lives of Sam Sylvester*, features Will, a queer, agender teen on the cusp of freedom from their closed-minded town and their abusive mother, who struggles with addiction. Four months before Will’s 18th birthday, their mother dies, and they must forge a new path forward.



Four Eyes

Rex Ogle, illus. Dave Valeza. Graphix, May. Ages 8–12

This series-launching graphic memoir takes Ogle—author of the PW-starred *Abuela, Don’t Forget Me*—back to his first year of middle school, when headaches indicate his need for glasses, leading to bullying at school and adding to financial tension at home. PW’s review praised “Valeza’s classic-feeling character designs [that] effectively capture the 1990s aesthetic, and visual jokes, like an optometrist called Eye Caramba, [that] add levity to a thoughtfully rendered read that tackles themes of loneliness, connection, and change.”



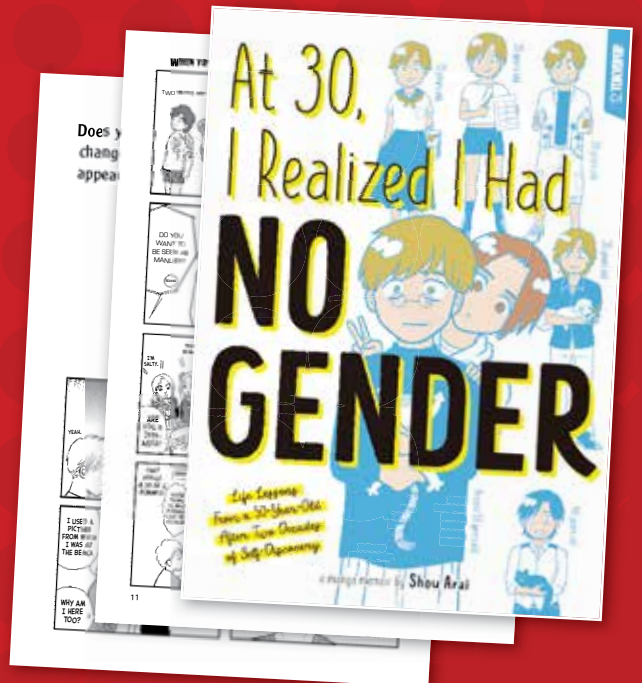
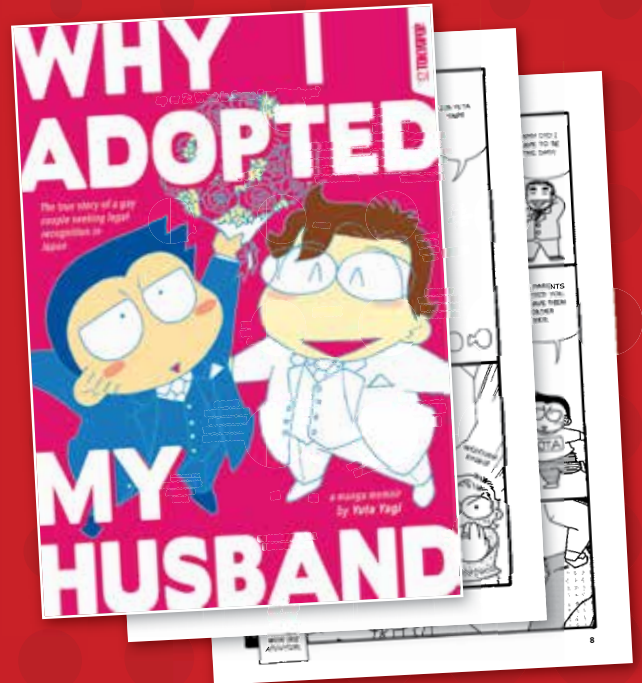
Green

Alex Gino. Scholastic, Oct. Ages 8–12

Gino returns to the world of their Stonewall and Lambda Literary Award-winning *Melissa* and the PW-starred *Rick* with a middle grade story about a queer, nonbinary child named Green. Their middle school is putting on *The Wizard of Oz*, and though the Rainbow Spectrum group has fought for gender-free casting, Green doesn’t get a part—but they do get a chance to work backstage alongside their crush, Ronnie.



Discover the
TRUE STORIES
of LGBTQ+ people
in **JAPAN!**



Biggest Little Girl

by Jodi Angel



14-year-old Joey has run away from home in smalltown California in search of anything better. She's got a few dollars and a bus ticket north, but at a truck stop just 30 miles from home, she meets Jerry with his gold watch and wad of cash. Jerry buys Joey a hamburger and offers her a job in Reno—making deliveries—and desperate for someone to trust, she accepts.... This is a survival story.

Jodi Angel is a rock star.... one of my literary idols. Anything she writes is solid gold wrapped in black leather. This novel is gorgeous.

—Luis Alberto Urrea

Every sentence is pure poetry. Gritty, beautiful, and raw, Jodi Angel takes her characters — and her readers — on one hell of a ride. Hold on.

—Jennifer Pashley



Biggest Little Girl

MADVILLE
P U B L I S H I N G

LGBTQ Voices in Publishing



Imogen, Obviously

Becky Albertalli. HarperCollins/Balzer + Bray, May. Ages 14 and up

High school senior Imogen considers herself to be the “world’s best ally”—and straight—until she visits her best friend Lili at college, where Lili is newly out and has told her friends that Imogen is bisexual. “Via Imogen’s wryly funny first-person narration,” per *PW*’s starred review, “Albertalli crafts a striking portrait of one teenager’s experience navigating sexual fluidity and the sometimes overwhelming fear of reinventing oneself.”



Kween

Vichet Chum. Quill Tree, Oct. Ages 13 and up

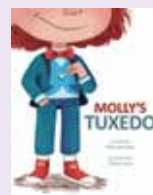
Cambodian American playwright Chum debuts with a contemporary YA set among the Cambodian community in Lowell, Mass. Soma is a queer teen girl who has gone viral on social media for her slam poetry in the aftermath of her father’s deportation back to Phnom Penh. She gathers the courage to enter her high school’s poetry competition while finding her voice and falling for a girl named Britney.



Molly’s Tuxedo

Vicki Johnson, illus. by Gillian Reid. Little Bee, June. Ages 4–8

Published in partnership with GLAAD, this picture book follows a redheaded kindergartner getting ready for picture day—she wants to wear her brother’s old tuxedo instead of the uncomfortable dress her mom picked out. Johnson’s text explores Molly’s conflicting desires to please her mom and feel like herself, and Reid’s illustrations depict Molly’s new confidence in her gender nonconforming outfit.



The Prince and the Coyote

David Bowles, illus. by Amanda Mijangos. Levine Querido, Sept. Ages 12 and up

Pura Belpré honoree Bowles tells the story of Acolmiztli, the 16-year-old crown prince of Tetzco, who in 1418 Mexico goes on the run after his father dies in a power struggle. In the wild, he is helped by a coyote and takes on a new name—Nezahualcoyotl, or “fasting coyote.” Through a blend of prose and poetry, incorporating black-and-white illustrations by Mijangos and queer love stories, Bowles explores Nezahualcoyotl’s quest to survive, find himself, and establish the Aztec Empire.



The Secret Summer Promise

Keah Brown. Levine Querido, June. Ages 12 and up

“Lighthearted romance that’s sure to gratify,” according to *PW*’s review, “and meaningful conversations surrounding friendship and first love drive this earnest treat from Brown,” making her YA debut after the adult essay collection *The Pretty One* and the picture book *Sam’s Super Seats*. Andrea, a Black bisexual 17-year-old with cerebral palsy, is determined to cross off all the entries on her summer must-do list, including falling out of love with her best friend Hailee, who is Chinese.



—K.M.