



Awards

by Ellen Bosman

Encyclopedia Copyright © 2015, glbtq, Inc.
Entry Copyright © 2004, glbtq, inc.
Reprinted from <http://www.glbtq.com>

While many works that we now recognize as masterpieces of glbtq literature were published well before the emergence of the modern gay rights movement, most of the contemporary literary awards given specifically to honor glbtq books date from the post-Stonewall period. Indeed, the major glbtq literary awards may be seen as an outgrowth of the modern American gay rights movement, so intertwined are they with the movement for equality.

Methods of Literary Acclaim

Acclaim for literary works takes many forms. The earliest forms, book reviews and bestseller status, are interrelated. A favorable review can propel an item onto a bestseller list. However, book reviewing is a much older phenomenon than bestseller lists.

The appearance of printed bestseller lists in 1895 legitimized sales figures as a measure of literary acclaim. Bestseller lists are usually generated by the publishing industry. Attainment of bestseller status, however, is a reflection of sales figures rather than a measure of literary quality, and books often achieve bestseller status as a result of notoriety or salaciousness rather than because of their seriousness or literary merit.

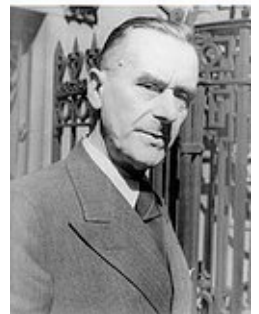
Beyond bestseller lists, book reviews can also serve as a gauge of literary success. While there are many types of reviews, all rely on the opinions of a reviewer and therein lies the weakness of reviews to rate literary triumph--they represent the judgments of particular individuals.

Thoughtful reviews by a number of qualified reviewers can establish a critical consensus as to the merit of a particular book and can propel a literary career. But some books, especially from independent publishers, fail to be reviewed at all and must depend on word-of-mouth to gain an audience. Moreover, mainstream publications often refuse to review serious books with glbtq content.

The leading journals dedicated to reviewing glbtq books are *Lambda Book Report*, *The Gay and Lesbian Review Worldwide*, and *Bay Area Reporter*, as well as the academic publications *Journal of Homosexuality* and *GLQ: A Journal of Gay and Lesbian Studies*.

By contrast with book reviews, selection by a book club usually involves a panel of judges, theoretically mitigating the possibility of individual bias. Rooted in literary salons of the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries, book clubs serve the function of identifying works that a particular audience is likely to be interested in. The earliest book clubs were local and specialized, but with the founding of the Book-of-the-Month Club in 1926 (1950 under the pseudonym Donald Webster Cory, a name that was chosen to allude to André Gide's *Confessions*), a club ensures a national audience, it is an audience limited in scope to club members.

The Homosexual in America was the first widely-read book of non-fiction to present homosexuality and a book of sexuality sympathetically and from the perspective of an insider. As was the *Queer Book Club*, a series of letters from 1952 by Edward Sagarin, having published *The Homosexuality*. These



Several glbtq writers have won Nobel Prizes in Literature. They include (top to bottom) T. S. Eliot, André Gide, Selma Lagerlöf, and Thomas Mann. Photographs of T. S. Eliot, André Gide, and Thomas Mann courtesy Library of Congress Prints and Photographs Division.

Image of Selma Lagerlöf is a detail from a portrait painted by Carl Larsson in 1908.

The photograph of Sagarin and Co. is a detail from a portrait painted by Carl Larsson in 1908.

correspondents became the targeted audience of the "Cory Book Service," a subscription service that selected a gay-themed book each month, usually literary works of high quality. While the "Cory Book Service" was small and did not last very long, it did establish the fact that there was an audience for gay-themed books, even during the McCarthy-era, when homosexuality was widely disdained and homosexuals derided as security risks.

Currently, the largest commercial book club to feature glbtq books is the Insight Out Book Club, which offers a large selection of discounted glbtq books, ranging from memoirs and biographies to fiction and erotica.

Book Awards

Book awards combine the best elements from each mode of literary acclaim. The value judgments inherent in reviewing are present in the awards process, but, like book club selection, assessment is made by a group. Additionally, awards panels frequently consult reviews and bestseller lists to determine nominations. The added benefit of professional or commercial organizational sponsorship confers legitimacy upon awards and provides an avenue for promoting the awards and winners.

The most prestigious, and by far the most lucrative, of international literary prizes is the Nobel Prize for Literature. First given in 1901, the Nobel Prize has sometimes gone to writers who seem, in retrospect, unworthy. Many of the winners are no longer considered major writers. Moreover, many giants of literature have been overlooked. Still, there is no doubt that the Nobel Prize helps define a successful literary career.

Among glbtq winners of the Nobel Prize are such figures as Selma Lagerlöf (1909), Thomas Mann (1929), Gabriela Mistral (1945), André Gide (1947), T. S. Eliot (1948), and Patrick White (1973).

In the United States, the oldest continuously awarded book prize is the prestigious Pulitzer Prize, which dates from 1917. It inaugurated the practice of giving awards in several distinct categories, in addition to the umbrella category "literature," which has come more and more to mean fiction.

Among glbtq Pulitzer Prize winners for literature are Willa Cather (1923), John Cheever (1979), John Kennedy Toole (1981), Alice Walker (1983), and Michael Cunningham (1999). Pulitzer Prize winners for poetry include such glbtq writers as Sara Teasdale (1918), Edna St. Vincent Millay (1923), Amy Lowell (1926), W. H. Auden (1948), Elizabeth Bishop (1956), Richard Howard (1969), John Ashbery (1976), James Merrill (1977), and Mary Oliver (1983). Among glbtq Pulitzer Prize winners for drama are Tennessee Williams (1948, 1956), William Inge (1953, 1955), Edward Albee (1967, 1975, 1994), Lanford Wilson (1980), Tony Kushner (1993), and Paula Vogel (1998).

Another prestigious American book award is the National Book Awards (NBAs). Presented annually since 1950, the NBAs were established by a consortium of book publishers to recognize the best in American writing. Among the most prestigious of literary awards, the NBAs are selected by five-member independent judging panels for each of the four genres that are currently recognized: Fiction, Nonfiction, Poetry, and Young People's Literature. The winners receive a substantial cash award and a crystal sculpture.

While many glbtq authors have won awards, glbtq-themed books were rarely recognized prior to 1971, when Francis Steegmuller won for *Cocteau: A Biography*, which forthrightly addressed Jean Cocteau's homosexuality. In 1981, John Boswell's *Christianity, Social Tolerance and Homosexuality* became the first non-fiction, gay-themed work by a gay author to win an NBA. In 1992, another such work, Paul Monette's *Becoming a Man: Half a Life Story*, was honored.

Among glbtq winners of the National Book Award are the following: Newton Arvin (1951), W. H. Auden (1956), John Cheever (1958, 1981), James Merrill (1967, 1979), Thornton Wilder (1968), Elizabeth Bishop (1970), Howard Moss (1972), Frank O'Hara (1972), Ursula K. Le Guin (1973), Allen Ginsburg (1974), Adrienne

Rich (1974), Marilyn Hacker (1975), John Ashbery (1976), John Boswell (1981), Alice Walker (1983), Richard Howard (1983), Paul Monette (1992), Mary Oliver (1992), Gore Vidal (1993), and Susan Sontag (2000).

Britain's most prestigious book prize, awarded to the best full-length novel written in English by a citizen of the United Kingdom, Ireland, Pakistan, South Africa, and nations of the British Commonwealth, is the Man Booker Prize. First awarded in 1969, it had not been presented to an openly glbtq author or for a gay-themed novel until 2004, when Alan Hollinghurst's *The Line of Beauty* was honored. Interestingly, in 2004 another of the six finalists for the award was also a gay-themed work by an openly gay author, Colm Tóibín's *The Master*.

Another significant American book prize is the Clifton Fadiman Award for Excellence in Fiction. Sponsored by the Mercantile Library of New York and named for the distinguished editor and reviewer, the award, which includes a \$5000 cash prize, was established in 2000 to recognize a work of fiction by a living American author who deserves recognition and a wider readership. In 2005, James Purdy's *Eustace Chisholm and the Works* (1967) was chosen for the honor.

GLBTQ Book Awards

The Task Force on Gay Liberation of the American Library Association created the first book award specifically for glbtq literature in 1971, in the heady days following the Stonewall Rebellion of the summer of 1969. Spearheaded by activist and bibliographer Barbara Gittings, the creation of the Gay Book Award, as it was then known, was a grassroots effort involving both librarians and non-librarians to recognize works of "exceptional merit relating to the gay, lesbian, bisexual, transgendered experience."

Initially, fiction and nonfiction competed equally for the prize and decisions regarding winners were made by consensus. At the 1971 ALA convention in Dallas, the Task Force presented the first Gay Book Award to Alma Routsong, who wrote as Isabel Miller, for *Patience and Sarah* (formerly published as *A Place for Us*).

Such was the nature of this homegrown initiative that early recipients of the Gay Book Award might receive anything from a hand-lettered scroll to a commencement cap, lavender cape, or even a kite. By 1981, however, the publication of glbtq literature had increased to such a degree that it was impossible to make decisions by consensus, so an awards committee with formal guidelines and procedures was established.

The following year the Task Force, now known as the Gay, Lesbian, Bisexual, and Transgender Round Table, petitioned the American Library Association's award committee to formally recognize the Gay Book Award; this recognition was granted in 1986. Other significant developments in the history of the award include establishing cash awards for winners (1986), creating separate awards for literature and non-fiction (1990), designating "Honor Book" status for runners-up (2001), renaming the awards the Stonewall Book Awards (2002), and creating a Children'/Young Adult award (2010).

The narrowness of Stonewall's categories guarantees tough competition, which lends prestige to the award. A selective list of winners, in addition to Routsong, includes life partners Del Martin and Phyllis Lyon, Joan Nestle, Jim Grimsley, Randy Shilts, Edmund White, and Leslie Feinberg. Lillian Faderman was the first author to triumph twice, both times in the same category, and Sarah Schulman was the first to earn Stonewalls in different categories.

Other milestones include the first African-American awardees, Essex Hemphill (1993) and Marci Blackman (2000). The earliest Asian-American winners were Urvashi Vaid (1996) and Noel Alumit (2003). Moisés Kaufman, a native of Venezuela, is the first person of Hispanic origin to win the award (2002).

In addition to supporting three awards, the Round Table also produces two annual bibliographies: the Rainbow Book List (est. 2009) and that Over the Rainbow Book List (est. 2011), designed to recognize quality books with significant and authentic glbtq content.

Lambda Literary Awards

Like the Stonewall Awards, the Lambda Literary Awards are landmarks in the world of glbtq literature. Founded in 1988, the Lammys are presented annually by the Lambda Literary Foundation, usually at a gala dinner in association with the meeting of the American Booksellers Association, for the purpose of "recogniz[ing] excellence in gay, lesbian, bisexual, and transgender literature and publishing."

Lammys are given in as many as twenty categories, often with a male and female winner in each. In recent years and within selected genres, male and female authors have competed against each other, and books from small presses compete separately regardless of genre. Winners are selected by a large panel of judges.

Initially, the awards were given for fiction, nonfiction, poetry, first novel, and science fiction/fantasy/horror. The explosion of glbtq literature necessitated the creation of new categories: Children's/Young Adult Literature, Humor, Mystery, and Anthologies were all added in 1989, the latter further divided into fiction/nonfiction in 1994. Other categories added were Queer Studies and Biography/Autobiography (1993), Photography/Visual Arts and Drama (1994), Spirituality/Religion (1995), Transgender/Bisexual (1996), and Erotica and Romance (2001). AIDS books were included as a special category between 1988 and 1990.

An award for Debut Fiction, including a cash stipend, has in recent years been given to both a male and female author. In addition, the Lambda Literary Foundation presents some special awards, including Editor's Choice Awards, Pioneer Awards, and Publisher's Service Awards.

There is substantial overlap in Lammy and Stonewall honorees. Andrew Hollinghurst, winner of the first Lammy for gay male fiction, also won the Stonewall the same year. Other authors to appear on both lists include Dorothy Allison, Alison Bechdel, Christopher Bram, Michael Cunningham, Nancy Garden, David Levitt, and Achy Obejas.

The sheer quantity of awards presented by the Lambda Literary Foundation guarantees a long and diverse list of winning authors. For example, thirteenth-century Arab scholar Ahmad al-Tifashi tied with Hispanic American Michael Nava for the first Lammy in the Gay Men's Small Press category, making al-Tifashi the first posthumously awarded author and Nava the first Hispanic winner.

Other Lammy winners include Gloria Anzaldúa, George Chauncey, Tee Corinne, Leslie Feinberg, Katherine Forrest, Judy Grahn, Doris Grumbach, Harmony Hammond, Joseph Hansen, Karla Jay, Randall Kenan, Larry Kramer, Audre Lorde, Paula Martinac, J. D. McClatchy, Mark Merlis, Joan Nestle, Adrienne Rich, Will Roscoe, Assoto Saint, Claude Summers, Sarah Waters, Edmund White, Barbara Wilson, Jacqueline Woodson, and Bonnie Zimmerman.

The unusual rule that allows consideration in more than one category has led to the same title winning more than one Lammy in the same year (as, for example, Martin Duberman's *Hidden from History* and Paul Monette's *Borrowed Time*). The expansion of categories and a rule change that permits male and female authors to compete against each other within selected genres reduces the likelihood of repeat winners in a given year.

Publishing Triangle Awards

The Publishing Triangle Awards is another example of an award originating with a group of glbtq professionals. Founded in 1989 by the Association of Lesbians and Gay Men in Publishing, the awards intend to "further the publication of books . . . written by lesbian and gay authors or with lesbian and gay themes." The awards are presented annually to the best female and male author in several categories and carry a cash prize.

The Bill Whitehead Award, the oldest Publishing Triangle Award, honors lifetime achievement and is presented to a male in odd numbered years and a female in even numbered years. Whitehead winners have included Audre Lorde, Armistead Maupin, John Rechy, and M. E. Kerr. The playwriting award, established in 1994, also alternates between males and females and has acknowledged Lisa Korn, Doric Wilson, Paula Vogel, Chay Yew, and Christopher Shinn.

Nonfiction and poetry PTAs were added in 1997 and 2001 respectively. David Sedaris, Amber Hollibaugh, Terry Wolverton, Neil Miller, and John D'Emilio are just a few of the nonfiction awardees, while Mark Doty and Marilyn Hacker are representative of the poetry winners circle.

Since 1994, the Ferro-Grumley Awards have been presented as part of the Publishing Triangle Awards. Originally established in 1990, the Ferro-Grumley Awards are awarded for literary fiction and have paid tribute to Felice Picano, Michael Cunningham, Jeanette Winterson, and Carol Anshaw.

Newer Awards

The 1990s were a watershed period for glbtq book awards, with the creation of six new prizes. Kicking off the decade was the James Tiptree, Jr. Memorial Award. This independently financed annual prize honors science fiction or fantasy fiction that bends traditional gender concepts. The nomination process is open and five judges determine the winners, who receive a cash award.

A retrospective award was presented on the Tiptree's fifth anniversary to pay tribute to titles whose publication predated the award. Ursula K. Le Guin has won several Tiptrees, as well as the retrospective award. Several titles with glbtq themes, including works by Nicola Griffith, have received the award since 1991.

In 1996, the Arch and Bruce Brown Foundation awards were created. The awards rotate annually between three categories: theater, full-length fiction, and short fiction. Submissions must present glbtq life in a positive manner and must have some historical connection, either "based on or inspired by a historic person, culture, event, or work of art." More than one winner per year is permitted and a cash prize granted. Lesléa Newman and Harlan Greene may be the best known winners of this award.

In addition to writing awards, the Arch and Bruce Brown Foundation also presents Production Awards to offset expenses in producing theatrical, film, and video works.

Book industry professionals are responsible for producing the Firecracker Alternative Book Awards, which were established in 1996 and were given until 2002. Not limited to glbtq-themed works, Firecrackers honor books that other award juries might consider too wild or insurrectionary.

In keeping with this revolutionary stance, among the Firecrackers' ten categories are awards for the best books dealing with sex and drugs. Traditional genres are also included: fiction, nonfiction, poetry, art/photography, children's, music, and politics, as well as recognition for 'zines. Several books with glbtq content have won Firecrackers.

The entry-fee based Independent Publisher Book Awards, or "IPPY" awards, began in 1997. The awards recognize the best independently published titles in fifty-five categories. Glbtq works had their own category from the beginning, although fiction and nonfiction works compete against each other for the award. One winner and multiple finalists are awarded each year. The IPPYs are the first awards program open exclusively to independently published books; not surprisingly, the winners have been lesser known authors.

Unique among glbtq awards is the genre specific Gaylactic Spectrum Awards, which began in 1998. While

the Tiptree awards focus on works that expand our understanding of gender, the Gaylactic Spectrum Awards honor "works in science fiction, fantasy and horror which include positive explorations of gay, lesbian, bisexual or transgendered characters, themes, or issues." The annual juried awards have an open nomination process and three permanent categories: novel, short fiction, and other work. Hall of Fame inductees are selected yearly in tribute to works originally released prior to 1998.

Winners and Hall of Fame inductees read like a who's who of science fiction: Madeline L'Engle, Marion Zimmer Bradley, Mercedes Lackey, Arthur C. Clarke, and Clive Barker.

In 1999 *ForeWord Magazine*, a trade magazine for independent publishers, established the Book of the Year Awards. To be eligible for this award, a work must originate with an independent or university press. Like the Independent Publisher Book Awards, this award also charges an entry fee. Originally, glbtq fiction and nonfiction vied against one another; however, now there are separate categories for the genres. Like the recipients of the IPPYs, most of the winners of this award are not well known. However, some of the recipients, such as Minne Bruce Pratt, Patricia Nell Warren, Michelle Tea, and Lawrence Schimel, are established glbtq writers.

Beginning in 2005, the Golden Crown Literary Society began offering Goldies to recognize quality lesbian literature. At first the awards were given in only three categories (romantic/erotic, mystery/adventure/thriller, and scifi/fantasy/paranormal/horror) plus a trailblazer award. Now the awards are given in numerous categories, though the emphasis remains on genre fiction, especially romance and mystery.

Some scholarly organizations also honor outstanding works on glbtq topics. For example, the Committee on Lesbian, Gay, and Transgender History, an affiliate of the American Historical Society, awards the John Boswell Prize for the outstanding book on glbtq history published in English over the previous two years. Similarly, the Association for Queer Anthropology, an affiliate of the American Anthropological Society, presents the Ruth Benedict Award annually to recognize excellence in a scholarly book written from an anthropological perspective about a glbtq topic.

Although not strictly a literary award, the Monette-Horwitz Awards, which recognize individuals who make significant contributions to eradicating homophobia frequently honor writers and scholars and are often presented at the Lambda Literary Awards ceremony. The Monette-Horwitz Trust was established in the will of novelist and memoirist Paul Monette to commemorate his loving partnership with Roger Horwitz. Among the writers who have been honored with Monette-Horwitz Awards are Lillian Faderman, Chris Freeman, Jonathan Ned Katz, Yolanda Retter, Will Roscoe, Barbara Smith, Susan Stryker, and Claude Summers.

The glbtq community also honors its writers by celebrating their contributions over a sustained period. For example, the Saints and Sinners Literary Festival in New Orleans inducts well-known writers into a Hall of Fame. Among such writers who have been honored are Ann Bannon, Mark Doty, Katherine Forrest, Jewelle Gomez, Felice Picano, Val McDermid, and Patricia Nell Warren.

Bibliography

Arch and Bruce Brown Foundation Awards: www.aabbfoundation.org/.

ForeWord Magazine Book of the Year Awards: <https://botya.forewordreviews.com/>.

Gaylactic Spectrum Awards: www.spectrumawards.org/.

Golden Crown Literary Society Awards: <http://goldencrown.org/awards/>.

Independent Publisher Book Awards: www.independentpublisher.com/ipland/IPAwards.php.

John Boswell Prize: <http://clgbthistory.org/prizes/john-boswell-prize/>.

Lambda Literary Awards: www.lambdaliterary.org/awards/.

Monette-Horwitz Awards: <http://www.monettehorwitz.org/history.html>.

National Book Awards: <http://www.nationalbook.org/nba.html>.

Publishing Triangle Awards: publishingtriangle.org/awards.asp.

Ruth Benedict Prize: <http://queeranthro.org/awards>.

Stonewall Awards: <http://www.ala.org/glbtrt/award>.

Tiptree Awards: www.tiptree.org/.

About the Author

Ellen Bosman is a librarian at New Mexico State University. She is a former chair of the American Library Association's Stonewall Book Award Committee.