

## Queer Short Stories: An Inverted History

BRETT JOSEF GRUBISIC AND CARELLIN BROOKS

In 2013 LGBT History Month Scotland, a website project administered by LGBT Youth Scotland and partially funded by the Scottish government, posted a submissions call for *Out There*, an anthology in which Scottish authors who self-identify as lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender or intersex would explore the nation's social and sexual landscape. The call stated that in addition to posting select pieces online, the anthology would be published by Glasgow's Freight Books, whose sister publication, *Gutter*, devoted a 2012 issue to LGBT stories.

From the vantage point of 2015, a special issue and an anthology focused on LGBT writing does not represent groundbreaking news. That status quo, however, is in itself noteworthy. When Lillian Faderman and Stuart Timmons remark that 'changes in gay life over the past half-century have been astonishing', they refer to widespread societal developments (in the European Union and North America especially) related to the heightened agency and social status of sexual minorities that began in the late 1960s.<sup>1</sup> These changes are all the more striking in light of earlier periods. Ellis's 1897 summation – 'I realized that in England, more than in any other country, the law and public opinion combine to place a heavy burden and a severe social stigma on the manifestations of an instinct which to these persons who possess it frequently appeared natural and normal' (p. 59) – stands in marked contrast to Tom Warner's 2002 description of the 'historically unprecedented' accomplishments of Anglo-American activists during the twentieth century's final decades: they rejected 'the quasi-human role in which gays, lesbians and bisexuals had been cast throughout history, a role that forced them to hide their sexual orientation, to disguise themselves, and to lead double lives filled with fear, isolation, and self-loathing'.<sup>2</sup>

Burdensome conditions took various forms. Faderman illustrates one effect of categorization: ‘As an undergraduate in college I was an English major, but the only time I learned about a lesbian book was in an Abnormal Psych class, where [Radclyffe Hall’s 1928 novel] *The Well of Loneliness* was mentioned.’<sup>3</sup> Similarly, Terry Castle remarks on Jeanette Howard Foster, whose *Sex Variant Women in Literature* was ‘issued privately and at her own expense in 1956, at a time when no reputable publisher would touch the subject of female homosexuality’; as an undergraduate in the early 1970s, Castle located Foster’s book ‘hidden away in a special, non-circulating, “Triple X-rated” stack behind the front desk’.<sup>4</sup> Though Martin Duberman comments on the absence of a public historical record of homosexuality before the 1970s, other historians cite increased antipathy. Alan Bray identifies mass arrests and executions that ‘violently repressed’ homosexuality, stating that ‘on whatever scale [homosexuality] was viewed its visibility would be curtailed’.<sup>5</sup> Likewise, Randolph Trumbach labels the eighteenth century sodomite subclass in England a ‘despised minority’ subject to ‘physical violence’ and H. G. Cocks states that same-sex ‘desire was criminalized in new ways and policed more vigilantly than ever’ in the nineteenth century despite a handful of intellectuals making minor inroads into Victorian prejudices.<sup>6</sup>

Given the trajectory charted by historians of sexual minorities – from ‘nothing but oppression and isolation, opprobrium and closetry’ with concomitant efforts at survival, resistance and agency, to visibility in the form of a multi-faceted reader/author demographic and an equally diverse literary infrastructure of LGBT publishers, bookstores, journals and websites – it is unsurprising that Mark Mitchell and David Leavitt conclude that the vast majority ‘of “gay” texts known today were written after the Great War; and the majority of these after the Stonewall riots; and, as if literary history were a series of Chinese boxes, the vast majority of these after the advent (in the West) of the human immunodeficiency virus’ in the early 1980s.<sup>7</sup>

This contemporary plenitude can be confirmed by a glance at any multi-national bookseller’s website. Alongside scores of anthology titles, English, Irish and Scottish prose anthologies such as Joseph Mills’s *Borderline* (2001), Joanne Winning’s *The Crazy Jig* (1992) Toni Davidson’s *And Thus Will I Freely Sing* (1989) and Mark Hemry’s *Chasing Danny Boy* (1999) appear under ‘Gay and Lesbian Literature Anthologies’. From Nicola Griffith and Stephen Pagel’s *Bending the Landscape* genre series (queer fantasy, science fiction,

horror) and G. Abel-Watters's *People Your Mother Warned You About* (2012) (stories of admonition by lesbian and gay authors), to Michael Harth's *Eros at Large* (2013) (gay male tales of desire) and Tom Léger and Riley MacLeod's *The Collection* (2012) (transgender short fiction), the myriad perspectives these volumes put into circulation attest not only to the complexity of queer experience but to the ongoing push to represent its thematic and aesthetic breadth.

Before this period of relative discursive plenitude, homosexuality remained a profoundly taboo subject. In *A Problem of Modern Ethics* (1891) John Addington Symonds described common belief as dictating that a male loving his own sex must be regarded as despicable, vicious and incapable of human sentiments. Long associated with sexual sin and social dissolution, its ignominiousness can be gauged through the condemnations expressed by eminent nineteenth-century figures: in 1803, Samuel Taylor Coleridge defined male–male love as ‘that very worst of all possible vices’ and during his closing statement at Oscar Wilde’s second trial in 1895, Justice Wills castigated the felon (newly convicted of gross indecency): ‘One has to put stern restraint upon oneself to prevent oneself from describing in language I ought not to use the sentiments which must arise in the breast of every man who has a spark of decent feeling in him, and who has heard of details of these two terrible trials.’<sup>8</sup>

Considering what Jeffrey Weeks calls the grey intellectual climate for homosexual discourse and related subjects that threatened the moral consensus, and what Joseph Cady, surveying nineteenth-century literary production, defines as an identity fettered by the ‘long-standing cultural claim that same-sex desire was “unspeakable”’, the non-visibility of both homosexuals and their literature can scarcely register as surprising.<sup>9</sup> To simplify, a contemporary reader searching for a ‘lesbian story’ published around 1864 (the year Karl Heinrich Ulrichs coined the word ‘homosexual’) or a ‘gay story’ in 1885 (when the Labouchère Amendment of the British Criminal Law Act made all male homosexual acts imprisonable offences) would not readily obtain one, especially if their expectation matched Marilyn R. Farwell’s definition – ‘I argue that the lesbian narrative is not necessarily a story by a lesbian about lesbians but rather a plot that affirms a place for lesbian subjectivity, that narrative space where both lesbian characters and other female characters can be active, desiring agents.’<sup>10</sup>

Despite the hostile milieu, however, scholars have made persuasive claims for the steady growth of a discreet homosexual literature throughout this period. Speaking broadly, Weeks observes that the ‘tightening grip of the

law, and the force of public disapproval which it stimulated, was beginning to create a community of knowledge, if not of life and feeling, among male homosexuals'. For evidence, he refers to Symonds's fin-de-siècle claim that a vast subterranean literature on homosexuality little known to general readers existed for those who knew where to search. Mitchell and Leavitt likewise contend that since the eighteenth century, men who were 'sexually attracted to other men – sodomites, pederasts, urnings, Uranians, similesexualists, queers' have constituted a distinct reading class and have displayed an 'astonishing tenacity in locating those poems, stories, novels, essays, and even individual sentences in which references to homosexual experience might be found'.<sup>11</sup>

Cady observes that blanketing prohibitions resulted in two general patterns: homosexual writing – including letters, journals, fiction, poetry and drama – that remained unpublished or printed for private circulation only; and, when released publicly, literature whose homosexual 'content was substantially camouflaged or buffered'. As such, James Gifford notes, the gay writing published between 1830 and 1920 and after 'often presents us with a mysterious text, because we are not sure how to read it . . . It offers an opening, we suppose, to certain sympathetic readers, men "in the know"'.<sup>12</sup> Gifford implies that during this period a proto-international gay male literature was forming, and cites 'Out in the Sun' (1913), an American-authored short story published by an Italy-based English vanity press, to illustrate that homosexuals seeking to write themselves into history faced mores that largely disallowed sexual otherness 'a platform for open discourse' (p. 8).

One consequence of the norm that predates the normalization of homosexuality in Western culture was authorial ingenuity at embedding queerness in print. Besides foreign, private and vanity presses, scholars list genre subversion – 'no matter which genre was chosen, it had to be modified, to allow for a different kind of expression', as Gifford puts it (p. 12) – as well as an encoded homosexual theme, mood, or aesthetic within a work, with masked and highly ambiguous results. Gifford discerns at least six discursive sites available to homosexual writers that range from portrayals of athleticism and fraternity to modes of aesthetics (posture, style, wit). Works with ambiguities featured suggestive markers that hinted at or touched on queerness while simultaneously letting readers 'know the limits of socially acceptable male homosocial desire' (p. 27).

Moreover, contrary to the assertions of Brian Reade ('it is true to say that homosexual literature [over the 1850–1900 period] for all practical purposes is

male homosexual literature' and Monique Wittig ('Male homosexual literature has a past, it has a present. The lesbians, for their part, are silent – just as all women are as woman at all levels'), literary historians discern a rich, if similarly indirect, tradition for lesbianism.<sup>13</sup> As with Emma Donoghue, the research leads scholars to assorted representations of women who felt passion for women, though again with the caveat of reading between the lines, or modifying contemporary expectations so that they include cryptic references or homoaffectional expression. Lillian Faderman asserts that veiling was a commonplace strategy to sidestep censorious social edicts, as was masking via 'perfunctorily changing the gender' of characters, or 'encoding' subject matter.<sup>14</sup> Faderman argues that Victorian literary representations of socially condoned romantic friendships between women were 'love relationships in every sense except perhaps genital' (p. 16). Surveying assorted texts, Faderman observes fluctuating attitudes that include the lesbian figure as exotic, fashionable, taboo, innocent and evil. She lists numerous serialized stories appearing in publications on both sides of the Atlantic before concluding that before the rise of lesbian-feminism, lesbian writers of popular literature generally depicted one of two types: the lesbian as a sickie or as a martyr (p. 392). Moreover, Faderman discerns an epochal break in lesbian imagery before and after 1920. With the popularization of medical models of sexuality, the lesbian character, she argues, would have 'been rushed off to a psychoanalyst to undergo treatment for her mental malady, or she would have ended her fictional existence broken in half by a tree, justly punished by nature . . . for her transgression'.<sup>15</sup> But a decade or two earlier, 'homoaffectional expression between women was far less restricted'; permissible behaviour included 'caressing, holding, exchanges of endearments and expressions of intense emotional commitment to each other' (p. 801). These relationships were regarded as unthreatening because society understood that the woman would give up her female love 'with the advent of a suitable male,' and that as an identity 'the lesbian' was virtually non-existent (p. 801). If depicted as lesbian, the figure would be expected to conform to a medical model (a masculine type, subject to scanty menstruation and pelvic disorders, or 'more or less hysterical or insane' (p. 802)).

Encoded, disguised, ambiguous, implicit and reformulated, these literary portrayals of homosexuality (generally, and within short stories in particular) offered distinct reading audiences dissimilar experiences: for one reader, a story's plot or characters would not incite moral outrage or obscenity

proceedings because of its protective veil of indirectness; and for readers attracted to the same sex who constituted a criminalized subclass demographic, the author encrypting her text in order to register an outlawed identity semi-publicly allowed queerness to be simultaneously discerned while remaining virtually undetected.

Characteristically published in magazines, newspapers and literary journals before being collected in book form, the following stories did not generally amass widespread attention for promoting or even hinting at indecent situations, characters, or themes: Reverend Edwin Emanuel Bradford's 'Boris Orloff' (1893); John Francis Bloxam's 'The Priest and the Acolyte' (1894); Charles Warren Stoddart's 'Pearl Hunting in the Pomotous' (in *South-Sea Idyls* (1873)); and Wilde's fairy tales (collected in *The Happy Prince and Other Tales* (1888) and *A House of Pomegranates* (1891)), in which John-Charles Duffy discerns 'five "answers" to anti-homosexual Victorian discourses' in the form of devoted friendships, non-reproductive sex, aestheticism, *paidierastia* and the 'unblessed, unnatural, unnameable'.<sup>16</sup> Other examples include Wilde's 'The Portrait of Mr W.H.' (1889); Count Stanislaus Eric Stenbock's *Studies of Death: Romantic Tales* (seven stories, including 'The True Story of a Vampire' (1894)); Frederick Rolfe's (Baron Corvo) 'In Praise of Billy B.' (1897) and 'Stories Toto Told Me' (1895); Charles Kenneth Scott-Moncrieff's 'Evensong and Morwe Song' (1908); D. H. Lawrence's 'The Prussian Officer' (whose strong homosexual component is noted by Mitchell and Leavitt; Faderman argues that Lawrence's *The Fox*, serialized in 1922, is a story that 'teaches that lesbians must be either killed or captured');<sup>17</sup> Charlotte Mew's 'Passed' (1894), which Kate Flint interprets as a story 'in which the style is directly . . . related to the expression – or the problematics of the expression – of a queer consciousness';<sup>18</sup> and Joseph Sheridan Le Fanu's 'Carmilla' (1871–2). Furthermore, the transnational periodical economy enabled foreign-authored short fiction – ranging from Jeanette Lee's 'The Cat and the King' (1919), Catherine Wells's 'The Beautiful House' (1912), O. Henry's 'The Last Leaf' (1906) and Gertrude Stein's 'Miss Furr and Miss Skeene' (1922), to Thomas Bailey Aldrich's 'Marjorie Daw' (1873), Jack London's 'The White Silence' (1899), Guy de Maupassant's 'Paul's Mistress' (1880) and Henry James's 'The Author of Beltraffio' (1884), 'The Pupil' (1891) and 'The Great Good Place' (1900), which Mitchell and Leavitt view as indicative of the author's rarely explicit homosexual content – to appear in English periodicals.

Evidently regarded by publishers as meritorious, such stories raised no subsequent controversy. Bret Harte's work serves as a useful illustration.

Hugely popular, the well-paid author was known for sentimental regionalism and adventure tales of the Wild West. One typical story, 'Uncle Jim and Uncle Billy,' appeared in the *Illustrated London News* (1897) during the American's residency in England. Ostensibly an account of close fraternity, Axel Nissen interprets it as a tale (one of many California-set tales about 'men without women' that Harte wrote between 1862 and 1895) highlighting 'male romantic friendship' and the 'romantic tradition of love between men'. In Nissen's reading Harte constructs 'an alternative, same-sex domesticity that problematizes and subverts the essentialism of Victorian domesticity's gender roles and norms'.<sup>19</sup>

In *Coming Out Weeks* references key societal contexts for British sexual minorities over a significant portion of the twentieth century with a sampling from England's popular press. Titled 'Evil Men,' one 1952 *Sunday Pictorial* article aimed to end a purported conspiracy of silence about the anarchic impact of homosexuality. A decade later the same mass-circulation newspaper printed 'How to Spot a Homo'. Between them, the 'Report of the Wolfenden Committee' (1957) in England recommended a progressive law modification for male homosexuals. Concerned about potential ramifications, its authors added a caveat: the proposed reform 'should not be interpreted as . . . a general licence to adult homosexuals to behave as they please'.<sup>20</sup>

For *Between the Acts*, moreover, Weeks and Kevin Porter collected reminiscences by homosexual men (born between 1892 and 1921) who were eyewitnesses to the era that stretched from the passing of the prohibitive Labouchère Amendment, notoriously known as a 'blackmailer's charter', to the Sexual Offences Act (1967), which partially decriminalized male homosexual activities. Weeks and Porter's introduction charts an overall 'triumph of individual courage and endurance' despite odds established by limiting forms of social regulation that enacted 'the privileging of heterosexuality and the denial of homosexuality'. In their view an aspect of that triumph was 'a small body of writing', from sexology research to poetry, which provided a vocabulary for homosexual men to understand and define themselves.<sup>21</sup>

From Wilde's conviction to obscenity trials for literary works by Hall, Lawrence, James Joyce, Henry Miller, Lawrence Durrell, A. T. Fitzroy (Rose Allatini's pseudonym) and Cyril Connolly, however, the twentieth century did not begin (nor reach a mid-point) in a manner that was auspicious to literary depictions of putatively obscene sexual congress or queer identities. As a result of these and other social prohibitions, writers addressing

homosexuality often continued to adopt protective encoding tactics and what Robert Phillips, editor of *The Stories of Denton Welch*, describes as Welch's 'Proustian Albertine strategy' – changing the 'sex of the protagonist from male to female'.<sup>22</sup> Also Proustian in style, Welch's *Brave and Cruel and Other Stories* appeared in 1948, the year of his death (at age thirty-three). Highly mannered early short fiction by Ronald Firbank, such as 'A Study in Temperament' (1905) and 'A Study in Opal' (1907), reads as influenced by British Aestheticism generally and Wilde in particular. Reviewers of a homosocial later work, the fifty-one-page 'Santal' (1921), nonetheless noted its dandyism, attention to style and (in a 1955 review) the author's 'discomforting sexual maladjustments', a view echoed in key reviews of Stephen Spender's story collection, *The Burning Cactus* (1936).<sup>23</sup> That sensibility (as well as read-between-the-lines quality) is apparent too in the prodigious output of L. P. Hartley. His story collections, such as *The Travelling Grave* (1948) and *The White Wand* (1954), range in genre from horror and supernatural to comedy of manners. Appearing sporadically, Christopher Isherwood's stories, including 'An Evening at the Bay' (1933), 'The Nowaks' (1936) and 'A Berlin Diary (Autumn 1930)' (1937), offer glimpses of urban culture characterized by the intermingling of heterosexual and homosexual.

Acts of private circulation and withholding writing from publication also remained in practice. E. M. Forster's novel *Maurice* and the short pieces in *The Life to Come and Other Stories* appeared posthumously (in the early 1970s). Forster's assessment of these works varied: in a diary entry from 1922 he called writing them 'positively dangerous to my career as a novelist'; he wrote that he burned all of his 'indecent writings or as many as the fire will take'.<sup>24</sup> He also showed them to other writers, including Isherwood and T. E. Lawrence (p. xiii). The sexual dalliances of 'Arthur Snatchfold' (1928), 'What Does it Matter' (c. 1930s) and 'The Obelisk' (1939), are set in circumstances ranging from fraught to comically satiric, and Forster's stories oscillate between gentle protests against the consequences of homosexual acts and paeans to the potential transcendence at the core of sexual experience.

The evocation of lesbians as monstrous, doomed or 'more or less hysterical or insane' continued as normative too, to the point that, in introducing her 'philosophical disquisition on the subject of the female variant', Ann Aldrich – the pen name of Marijane Meaker – included a story-sized excerpt from *The Price of Salt*, a novel that Patricia Highsmith published under the pseudonym Claire Morgan after her regular publisher rejected it.<sup>25</sup> Appearing

when 'dozens of novels of male and female homosexuality ... wound matters up with sleeping pills, murder, imprisonment, unbelievable self-reconversion, or the corpse in the swimming pool', this 1952 novel's happy ending caught Aldrich's eye.<sup>26</sup> Surveying fiction portraying lesbians, Bonnie Zimmerman supports the view held by Aldrich, stating that typical mid-century plots in English-language works 'either doomed [lesbian characters] to a cycle of unhappy love affairs or redeemed them through heterosexual marriage'.<sup>27</sup>

Similarly, tactful ambiguity stayed relatively commonplace. If the eroticism of Edith Ellis's 'Dolores' (1909), in which 'two women kissed in silence, their eyes lowered before the sorrow they had caught in each other's faces' draws attention with its rarity, with its echo of Edward Carpenter's *Ioläus: An Anthology of Friendship* (1917), editor Patrick Anderson and Alistair Sutherland's *Eros: An Anthology of Male Friendship* (1961) suggests an ongoing preference for euphemistic or veiled public terminology.<sup>28</sup> Short fiction by Radclyffe Hall ('Miss Ogilvy Finds Herself', 1934), Djuna Barnes ('A Little Girl Tells a Story to a Lady' and 'Cassation', 1929), Thomas Burke ('The Pash', 1926), Ivy Compton-Burnett (whose work, Jane Rule claims, 'stands at the asexual extreme of lesbian sensibility'), Elizabeth Bowen ('The Jungle', 1929, 'The Apple Tree', 1934, and 'The Demon Lover', 1944), H. E. Bates ('Breeze Anstey', 1937), Katherine Mansfield ('Leves Amores', written in 1907, 'Bains Turc', 1911, and 'Bliss', 1918), which Gillian Hanscombe labels as not 'a story about lesbians, but ... a story about lesbianism', Henry Handel Richardson (the pseudonym of Ethel Richardson) ('The Bathe' and 'Two Hanged Women', 1934) and Virginia Woolf's 'little Sapphist story', 'Slater's Pins Have No Points' (1928), feature content and sensibilities identifiable as homoerotic and homosocial, or otherwise imbued with homosexual themes.<sup>29</sup>

Still other stories, especially those by women, remain the subject of continuing critical argument. Their innate ambiguity or indirectness hinders simple or certain interpretation. For example, did Elizabeth Bowen, in 'The Demon Lover', intend the tale of a woman (haunted by memories of a female friend's death, saved by another woman's friendship and restored to her heterosexual marriage) to be read in terms of erotic same-sex attraction as well as friendship? Did D. H. Lawrence depict a weird and decidedly anxious parable about same-sex 'courtship' in 'The Prussian Officer' (1914)? Certainly his 'Rupert and Gerald', arguably not a short story at all (the characters reappear in *Women in Love*, in far more circumscribed form), depicts frank same-sex desire: 'All the time, he

recognized that, although he was always drawn to women, feeling more at home with a woman than with a man, yet it was for men that he felt the hot, flushing, roused attraction which a man is supposed to feel for the other sex.' This unvarnished tale, thought to have been written around 1916, remained unpublished until 1994.<sup>30</sup>

In the second half of the twentieth century depictions of unequivocally homosexual characters and social formations began to gain traction. For instance, Daphne du Maurier's 'Ganymede' (1959) is a *Death in Venice*-style account of a tourist enraptured by a waiter in the Piazzò San Marco. In 'May We Borrow Your Husband?' (1967), Graham Greene recounts a newlywed groom's deliberate seduction by a couple of male interior decorators, along with the bride's uncomprehending distress. In the same collection, 'Chagrin in Three Parts' features a narrator eavesdropping on a scene of seduction between a pair of wine-besotted women.

Gay writers' works also mirrored their historical period more generally, in particular with the popularization of Freudianism. Angus Wilson, whose short story collection *The Wrong Set* appeared in 1949 (followed by *Such Darling Dodos* in 1950), addressed the question of the smothering mother-figure from whom the young man wishes to free himself, only to be left bereft by her death ('Mother's Sense of Fun') and a paterfamilias, steered straight by his wife, whose eye begins to rove upon the arrival of a handsome young male exchange student ('Et Dona Ferentes'). In this latter story, Wilson's protagonist muses on the 'old feeling of twenty years ago, the old sensual pattern' that arises at the sight of Sven's 'brown chest where the line of his shirt lay open almost to his stomach'.<sup>31</sup> In the titular story a piano player informs the club's owner that 'surely you know Terry's a pansy' only to have him reply without rancour, 'That gets 'em all ways' (p. 105).

Internationally influential, Tennessee Williams exhibits ambivalence about homosexuality, especially in *Hard Candy* (1954), where homoeroticism is 'always linked to death'.<sup>32</sup> Noel Coward's stories span a range of camp but undeclared characters in earlier periods, as when the male main character of 'Star Quality' (1951), a playwright, defines his distaste for his director's assistant thus: 'You make it fairly obvious that you don't care for women.'<sup>33</sup> Later characterization becomes more frank, however. The narrator of 'Me and the Girls' (1964), for example, describes himself as 'queer' (p. 469). By 1978, William Trevor's titular character in 'Torridge' can expose the hypocrisy along with the homosexual affairs at the public school that other male characters believe they left behind with their boyhoods. Invited

to a get-together with three former pupils and their families, Torridge stands out as a figure of sophistication: “I’m what they call queer”, he explains to the children. “I perform sexual acts with men”.<sup>34</sup> His audience reacts with outrage, but Torridge remains unmoved by their disgust.

Although the historical liberation of sexual minorities is popularly thought of as having been sparked off in mid-1969 with an unwarranted police raid and subsequent rioting in front of the Stonewall Inn in New York City, such a belief overlooks a series of incremental nation-centric changes (like amendments to the legal standing of homosexuals, the founding of activist homophile organizations and the creation of lesbian and gay periodicals) that predated those summer protests. Even granting that galvanizing event a global watershed status, there was no corresponding literary moment. In short, the literature of sexual minorities did not suddenly blossom over a single season around 1970. Its growth was fitful, especially outside the United States.

Nonetheless, although typically ‘very polemical’, occasional liberation-era anthologies from lesbian-feminist presses – for example, Barbara Grier and Coletta Reid’s *The Lesbians Home Journal* (1976) and Judith Grahn’s *True to Life Adventure Stories* (1978) – put into circulation narratives that diverged markedly from the typical ‘hysterical or insane’ portraiture of preceding decades. Most scholarly analyses of post-Stonewall queer literature foreground non-fiction and novels and mention short stories in passing.<sup>35</sup> However, a tenuous internationalism began to emerge. In an early lesbian and gay fiction anthology, *The Other Persuasion* (1977), US editor Seymour Kleinburg selected English authors (including Isherwood, Hall, Lawrence, Greene and Forster) as well as Americans, while Anglo-Canadian editor Ian Young’s *On the Line* (1981) focused on US gay male authors.

The burgeoning market throughout the 1970s of quasi-lesbian erotic short fiction published in *Playboy* and competitors such as *Mayfair* and *Men Only* introduced (an admittedly ersatz version of) female homoeroticism to mainstream culture on a mass scale. For gay men, meanwhile, the ‘one-handed’ erotic short fiction of early pornographic magazines (such as *Quorum*, *Spartacus* and *Jeffrey* in Britain and *Mandate* in North America) served both utilitarian and political purposes.<sup>36</sup>

Conforming with Reed Woodhouse’s survey of post-Second World War gay male fiction and its overall taxonomy of a ‘basic polarity’ between portrayals of gay assimilation into mainstream mores and modes of sovereign gay identity (p. 6), Les Brookes views Stonewall as pivotal in gay self-awareness, though not an absolute break from past themes, and

post-Stonewall literature as reflecting a 'conflict between assimilationism and radicalism: between a fundamental acceptance of social and sexual norms and an outright rejection of them'.<sup>37</sup> While noting similarities (such as the thematic predominance of self-discovery, or coming out), Paulina Palmer's survey of literary productions of the same period pays less attention to Stonewall and instead asserts the centrality of the Women's Movement, lesbian-feminism and the growth of independent activist publishers.<sup>38</sup> Regarding lesbian material, Zimmerman states that over two hundred English language novels, memoirs and short story collections were published between 1969 and 1989 and that the vast majority were published by alternative presses and 'advertised through lesbian networks, sold in women's bookstores, and reviewed in lesbian, gay, and feminist newspapers', pointing to the cross-border maturation of a formerly non-hegemonic and invisible subculture.<sup>39</sup> To Zimmerman, the crucial motif within that body of work, stories included, was the creation of a myth of origins that enabled lesbians to self-identify and comprehend a historical community.

Short story anthologies of sexual minority writing appeared in larger numbers in the 1980s and reached an apex in the 1990s. The stories collected in this way might be valued as much for their representational qualities as for their literary excellence. Of note here are: the US-centric but internationally-marketed 'Men on Men', 'Women on Women' and 'Flesh and the Word' series that began in 1986; the *Faber Book of Gay Short Fiction* (1996); P. P. Hartnett's *The Gay Times Book of Short Stories* series (2000–2); and English editor Richard Canning's 'Between Men' series (2007–9), which features English authors Patrick Gale (author of *Dangerous Pleasures*, 1996), Alan Hollinghurst and Shaun Levin (author of *A Year of Two Summers*, 2005), among predominantly US authors. Because readers experienced relatively few reflections of their lived realities in other mainstream media during that era, depictions of the circumstances of sexual minorities, including family, romance and differences in class served important social functions beyond the sheer novelty of uncoded or unambiguous visibility.

Following the publication of his story collection *Lantern Lecture* (1981), Adam Mars-Jones anthologized writers in *Mae West is Dead* (1983), which collected lesbian and gay stories in relatively equal number but did not focus exclusively on the United Kingdom. While Mars-Jones refers only in passing to AIDS, 'the 1982 epidemic of panic and sexual fear', he later meditated upon the crisis facing gay males and men sexually involved with other men.<sup>40</sup> *The Darker Proof: Stories from a Crisis* (1987), by Mars-Jones and Edmund

White, contained six stories, four by Mars-Jones and two by White. They displayed assorted responses, from the gallows humour Mars-Jones described as necessary to break through his block in writing about the topic ('Slim'), through denial and sudden realization ('A Small Spade'). Mars-Jones, in introducing a 1992 collection of his own stories on the subject, asserted that 'the big issue [of AIDS] and the little form [of the short story] had a paradoxical affinity'.<sup>41</sup>

The first anthology of lesbian-feminist short stories in the United Kingdom was Lilian Mohin and Sheila Shulman's *The Reach* (1984). Although just one of its contributors used a pseudonym, in a subsequent anthology, Mohin and Anna Livia's *The Pied Piper* (1989), three opted to, citing fears regarding their employment: a controversial amendment to the Local Government Act of 1988 that forbade the teaching or publishing of material thought to promote homosexuality, Section 28 (repealed a dozen years later) contributed to a retributive social atmosphere for activism related to public homosexuality.

By the time of *The Pied Piper* its editors already understood the conventional scope of such an anthology: 'Here we have the "expected themes" of coming out, "bar" stories, countering anti-lesbianism, recovering lesbian history.'<sup>42</sup> They describe their project, in addition, as 'fashioning . . . lesbian culture' (p. x). Contributors express a preoccupation with links to the previously unknown, and magic realism is present in the titular story, where the Pied Piper turns out to be a lonely, time-travelling magical lesbian. In others, like Patricia Duncker's 'James Miranda Barry 1795–1865', women disguise themselves as men to obtain a better social status. In this collection, continuing preoccupations arise with the hidden and subterfuge. As editor of a later collection stated, lesbian short stories, written in an era of incomplete disclosure and societal repercussion, commonly reflect the 'importance of what is unsaid or cannot be said between women'.<sup>43</sup>

Perhaps as a consequence of the paucity of pre-twentieth century lesbian representation, writers re-imagine the past. 'The Secret of Sorrerby Rise', published by Frances Gapper in 1991, parodies Victorian melodrama. Commissioned for a 1993 anthology, Emma Donoghue's 'Words for Things' itemizes the dawning vocabulary of a fourteen-year-old girl in 1786: 'Tommie was when women kissed and pressed each other to their hearts, it said so in a dirty poem on the top shelf of the cabinet. Tribad was the same only worse.'<sup>44</sup> Other characters perpetuate a culture of concealment by not declaring their emotional states or desires. The reticence leads to re-enactments of the lesbian unhappy ending so familiar from *The Well of*

*Loneliness* and lesbian pulp fiction. But as Sara Ahmed notes in *The Promise of Happiness*, this spectre might in fact lead to societal critique by leaving open the possibility that the character's unhappiness, rather than being solely individuated, results from heteronormativity.<sup>45</sup> In addition to anthologies of lesbian literary fiction from English publishers (like *Everyday Matters 2* (1984) and *In and Out of Time* (1990)), there were also collections of lesbian science fiction (*The Needle on Full* (1985)), feminist supernatural fiction (*What Did Miss Darrington See?* (1989)) and love or eros (*Incidents Involving Warmth* (1988) and *Girls Next Door* (1985)). These all appeared during the late 1980s and early 1990s, alongside short fiction volumes by Livia, Barbara Burford, J. E. Hardy, Mary Dorsey, Cherry Potts and Caroline Natzler.

Generally, the anthologies have had overwhelmingly Anglo-Saxon contributors. There are, for example, no biographically identified writers of colour in *Mae West is Dead*, and *The Penguin Book of Lesbian Short Stories* (1993) contains one piece by a self-identified African-American writer, Jewelle Gomez. Likewise, in the *Diva Book of Short Stories* (2000), a single contributor, Jackie Kay, is readily identifiable as black. Although at least three women of colour contributed stories to *The Pied Piper*, only Maud Sulter's 'Blackwomansong' overtly references black characters. Appearing in late 2014, however, *Black and Gay in the UK* (edited by John R. Gordon and Rikki Beadle-Blair) features short fiction, poetry and essays.

As the simple catch-all of 'gay and/or lesbian writing' grew indistinct, geography also inspired the editors of story collections. The first Scottish-themed gay and lesbian anthology, *And Thus Will I Freely Sing* (1989), was followed by *The Crazy Jig* (1992). The editor, Joanne Winning, expresses satisfaction that *Jig* includes black Scottish voices, and Iona McGregor's introduction lauds the balance of male and female writers. Preoccupied as ever with the perennial question of taxonomy, McGregor poses familiar questions: 'Is it any longer possible to define or circumscribe gay writing? Must gay writers assert their identity in order to avoid being deconstructed into the heterosexual majority?'<sup>46</sup> Featuring Scottish authors, *Borderline* (2001) continued to broaden the content of gay and lesbian anthologies, the 'borderline' defined not by author sexuality per se – gay-themed excerpts from writers such as Irvine Welsh are included – but by geography. In this 'determinedly broad picture of Scottish writing [t]here are gay characters, perspectives, themes and – or maybe that should be "but" – there is a whole lot more'.<sup>47</sup> Topics include sadomasochism, abuse, bar pickups, religion and coming out; mythology and science fiction genres, among others, are represented.

Helen Sandler, editor of the *Diva Book of Short Stories* (2000), describes the stories in this 'Britdyke' anthology as 'Modern Lesbian . . . a way of weaving a story without sticking to a single thread, of letting the thoughts wander into wordplay or a witty aside without losing the plot. It's a use of the vernacular which looks casual but isn't.'<sup>48</sup> Limited to authors under twenty-five, Hartnett's *The Next Wave* (2002) includes transgendered writers. 'Bloke', by a writer identified only as 'Geezer', describes the main character's travails as a female-to-male transsexual. In 'Girl', the narrator is attracted to a transvestite, and their dalliance partakes in gender fluidity. As with *Diva* the anthology includes author photographs, indicating the distance between these anthologies and the pseudonyms of *The Pied Piper*.

Any discussion of contemporary short fiction is inseparable from reference to the general literary market. The undoubtable fact of best-selling, literary prize-winning and publicly queer-identified authors whose publications span novels, poetry and short fiction – ranging in the United Kingdom from Carol Ann Duffy, Jackie Kay, Ali Smith, Sarah Waters and Jeanette Winterson to Peter Ackroyd, Paul Bailey, Neil Bartlett, Alan Hollinghurst and Jamie O'Neill – suggests a wholly positive outcome to the political activism of earlier generations. Then again, contrary assertions (such as Justin Gowers's that the publishing industry in Britain remains indifferent to promoting the work of sexual minorities and that readers are more 'likely to discover exciting new gay writers in the blogosphere, or in queer literary magazines like *Chroma*, than on a publisher's list') imply an ongoing resistance to the worldview of sexual minorities unless it is accompanied by impressive sales figures.<sup>49</sup>

If nothing else, however, the perspectival breadth of literature written by and about sexual minorities spins a tale of diverse origins, politics and forms as well as a multiplicity of ongoing purposes. For example, in the preface of *Out There* (2014), a volume of thirty-two contributors 'who consider themselves LGBT and Scottish by birth, residence, inclination or formation', editor Zoë Strachan anchors the anthology in a personal context.<sup>50</sup> Strachan also places the volume within a broader political framework related to same-sex marriage in Scotland and, larger still, the urgent need for equal rights and freedom from persecution worldwide. *Out There* ends with contributor statements. Val McDermid's statement – 'My sexuality is important to my writing. But so is being a woman, being a mother, being Scottish and having a political consciousness' (p. 286) – echoes that of Jackie Kay, who writes:

'I suppose that everything I am influences my writing in some way – being black, being a mother, a daughter, a lesbian' (p. 282). Christopher Whyte, however, introduces a distinctly politicized motivation: 'The oppression I grew up with [in Glasgow] meant taboo after taboo had to be broken' (p. 292). The collective point of view diffused through *Out There*, and in scores of previous anthologies, and short story collections (including Ronald Frame's *Watching Mrs Gordon*, 1987, V. G. Lee's *As You Step Outside*, 2008, Ali Smith's *Free Love and Other Stories*, 1995, or Colm Tóibín's *The Empty Family*, 2010) evokes a complexity and irreducibility common to literature in general.

#### Notes

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