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These Are The Finalists for the 2020 Lambda Literary Awards, Announced Exclusively on OprahMag.com

Every year, the "Lammys" celebrate the best in LGBTQ literature

By Michelle Hart Mar 10, 2020



- OprahMag.com is exclusively announcing the finalists of the 32nd Annual Lambda Literary Awards (a.k.a. the "Lammys")
- For 30 years, the Lammys have honored the LGBTQ community's longstanding contribution to literature
- This year's nominees include Jacqueline Woodson, Ocean Vuong, Saeed Jones, Nicole Dennis-Benn, Carmen Maria Machado, & many more

 The winners will be announced live on Monday, June 8 in New York City, at a lively ceremony hosted by comedian and *Saturday Night Live* cast member Bowen Yang.

In our list of the LGBTQ books that'll change the literary landscape in 2020, we wrote that the previous year had seen something of a sea change in the kind of coverage afforded to queer literature. Our stories, which once were told only in the shadows, are finally coming to into the light.

Need proof? Poet Ocean Vuong's luminous debut novel *On Earth We're Briefly Gorgeous*—a fictionalized love letter to his Vietnamese mother and, in some ways, his own queer self—was not only a bestseller but was, according to certain metrics, the best reviewed book of the year. Moreover, Bernardine Evaristo's experimental novelin-verse *Girl, Woman, Other*—which includes a lesbian and non-binary person as main characters—was a co-winner of one of the most prestigious literary awards in the world: the UK's Booker Prize.

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2019's Best LGBTQ Books

50 Queer Authors Share Their Favorite LGBTQ Books

And three of our twelve favorite books of 2019 were by and about LGBTQ people: Jacqueline Woodson's *Red at the Bone;* Benjamin Moser's *Sontag;* and Nicole Dennis-Benn's *Patsy,* the latter of which Jenna Bush Hager chose for her Book Club. That doesn't even mention Kristen Arnett's *Mostly Dead Things* and Marlon James's *Black Leopard, Red Wolf*—queer-centric books that also landed on the *New York Times* Bestsellers list. "LGBTQ visibility has increased and the general public's understanding of the queer community has deepened," says Sue Landers, the Executive Director of Lambda Literary, a nonprofit organization dedicated to raising awareness of and showcasing LGBTQ authors and works. "Yet in many places in this world right now, it is still dangerous to be LGBTQ, which makes it all the more important to write and share our stories so that queer life can be better understood and celebrated."

Many of the books mentioned above are among the many finalists for the 32nd Annual Lambda Literary Awards, which Oprahmag.com is exclusively announcing today. These awards serve as a capstone on a monumental, mountain-moving year of queer reads.

Since 1989, the Lammys (as they're known colloquially) have recognized the critical role LGBTQ writers play in shaping our culture and society at large. Past winners have included literary legends like Alison Bechdel, Michael Cunningham, Roxane Gay, Audre Lorde, and many others.

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This year's nominees are a veritable reading rainbow of excellent books, including many that we've covered in these pages: De'Shawn Charles Winslow's *In West Mills* and Bryan Washington's *Lot* in the Gay Fiction category; Jericho Brown's *The Tradition* and Franny Choi's *Soft Science* in the Poetry categories; and Carmen Maria Machado's *In the Dream House*, Elissa Altman's *Motherland*, and T. Kira Madden's *Long Live the Tribe of Fatherless Girls* in the Nonfiction categories. Check out the rest here:

Lesbian Fiction

- Cantoras, Carolina De Robertis, Knopf
- A Generous Spirit: Selected Work by Beth Brant, Janice Gould, Sinister Wisdom & Inanna Publications
- Mostly Dead Things, Kristen Arnett, Tin House Books
- On Swift Horses, Shannon Pufahl, Riverhead Books
- Patsy, Nicole Dennis-Benn, Liveright Publishing
- A People's History of Heaven, Mathangi Subramanian, Algonquin Books of Chapel Hill
- Red at the Bone, Jacqueline Woodson, Riverhead Books
- Stay and Fight, Madeline ffitch, Farrar, Straus and Giroux

Gay Fiction

- Animalia, Jean-Baptiste Del Amo, translated by Frank Wynne, Grove Press
- The Archive of Alternate Endings, Lindsey Drager, Dzanc Books
- In West Mills, De'Shawn Charles Winslow, Bloomsbury Publishing
- Like This Afternoon Forever, Jaime Manrique, Kaylie Jones Books
- Lord, João Gilberto Noll, translated by Edgar Garbelotto, Two Lines Press
- Lot, Bryan Washington, Riverhead Books
- Murmur, Will Eaves, Bellevue Literary Press
- On Earth We're Briefly Gorgeous, Ocean Vuong, Penguin Press

Bisexual Fiction

- *Big Familia,* Tomas Moniz, Acre Books
- Deposing Nathan, Zack Smedley, Page Street

- Exquisite Mariposa, Fiona Alison Duncan, Soft Skull Press
- Jude, Garrett Leigh, Fox Love Press
- Just Pervs, Jess Taylor, Book*hug Press
- The Man Who Saw Everything, Deborah Levy, Bloomsbury Publishing
- The Not Wives, Carley Moore, The Feminist Press
- *The Remainder,* Alia Trabucco Zerán, translated by Sophie Hughes, Coffee House Press

Transgender Fiction

- The Beatrix Gates, Rachel Pollack, PM Press
- Honey Walls, Bones McKay, McKay & Gray Publications
- Little Blue Encyclopedia (for Vivian), Hazel Jane Plante, Metonymy Press
- *Poet, Prophet, Fox: The Tale of Sinnach the Seer,* M.Z. McDonnell, Selfpublished
- The Trans Space Octopus Congregation, Bogi Takács, Lethe Press

Bisexual Nonfiction

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- *IMPERVIOUS: Confessions of a Semi-Retired Deviant,* Janet W. Hardy, SinCyr Publishing
- Socialist Realism, Trisha Low, Coffee House Press
- A World Without Martha: A Memoir of Sisters, Disability, and Difference, Victoria Freeman, UBC Press

Transgender Nonfiction

- Females by Andrea Long Chu, Verso Books
- *Real Queer America: LGBT Stories from Red States,* Samantha Allen, Little, Brown and Company

- Theorizing Transgender Identity for Clinical Practice: A New Model for Understanding Gender, S.J. Langer, Jessica Kingsley Publishers
- *Time Is the Thing A Body Moves Through,* T Fleischmann, Coffee House Press
- We Both Laughed in Pleasure: The Selected Diaries of Lou Sullivan, Ellis Martin and Zach Ozma, Nightboat Book

LGBTQ Nonfiction

- *Bloodflowers: Rotimi Fani-Kayode, Photography, and the 1980s,* W. Ian Bourland, Duke University Press
- The Bodies of Others: Drag Dances and Their Afterlives, Selby Wynn Schwartz, University of Michigan Press
- Dying to Be Normal: Gay Martyrs and the Transformation of American Sexual Politics, Brett Krutzsch, Oxford University Press
- *Honeypot: Black Southern Women Who Love Women,* E. Patrick Johnson, Duke University Press
- In the Dream House, Carmen Maria Machado, Graywolf Press
- When Brooklyn Was Queer: A History, Hugh Ryan, St. Martin's Press
- Why Karen Carpenter Matters, Karen Tongson, University of Texas Press
- A Year Without a Name, Cyrus Grace Dunham, Little, Brown and Company

Lesbian Poetry

- & more black, t'ai freedom ford, Augury Books
- Odes to Lithium, Shira Erlichman, Alice James Books
- (the other house), Rocío Carlos, The Accomplices
- Pressure Cooker Love Bomb, Sharanpal Ruprai, Frontenac House
- Soft Science, Franny Choi, Alice James Books
- *Time,* Etel Adnan, translated by Sarah Riggs, Nightboat Books

- tsunami vs. the fukushima 50, Lee Ann Roripaugh, Milkweed Editions
- Without Protection, Gala Mukomolova, Coffee House Press

Gay Poetry

- Doomstead Days, Brian Teare, Nightboat Books
- The Experiment of the Tropics, Lawrence Lacambra Ypil, Gaudy Boy
- Eyes Bottle Dark with a Mouthful of Flowers, Jake Skeets, Milkweed Editions
- Losing Miami, Gabriel Ojeda-Sagué, The Accomplices
- NDN Coping Mechanisms: Notes from the Field, Billy-Ray Belcourt, House of Anansi Press
- The Revisionist & The Astropastorals, Douglas Crase, Nightboat Books
- SLINGSHOT, Cyrée Jarelle Johnson, Nightboat Books
- The Tradition, Jericho Brown, Copper Canyon Press

Bisexual Poetry

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- *Build Yourself a Boat*, Camonghne Felix, Haymarket Books
- *HoodWitch,* Faylita Hicks, Acre Books
- *Moira of Edges, Moira the Tart,* Moina Pam Dick, Organism for Poetic Research
- Pet Sounds, Stephanie Young, Nightboat Books
- Revenge of the Asian Woman, Dorothy Chan, Diode Editions
- ROMANS/SNOWMARE, Cam Scott, ARP Books
- A Sand Book, Ariana Reines, Tin House Books
- water/tongue, mai c. doan, Omnidawn

Transgender Poetry

- Dispatch, Cameron Awkward-Rich, Persea Books
- EXTRATRANSMISSION, Andrea Abi-Karam, Kelsey Street Press
- HULL, Xandria Phillips, Nightboat Books
- Our Weather Our Sea, Samuel Ace, Black Radish Books
- The Year of Blue Water, Yanyi, Yale University Press

Lesbian Mystery

- The Blood Runs Cold, Catherine Maiorisi, Bella Books
- Galileo, Ann McMan, Bywater Books
- The Hound of Justice, Claire O'Dell, Harper Voyager
- The Mirror of Muraro, Amelia Ellis, Newton Pryce Ingram
- Twisted at the Root: A Jane Lawless Mystery, Ellen Hart, Minotaur Books

Gay Mystery

- Carved in Bone: A Henry Rios Novel, Michael Nava, Persigo Press
- ChoirMaster: A Mister Puss Mystery, Michael Craft, Questover Press
- Death Takes a Bow, David S. Pederson, Bold Strokes Books
- The Fourth Courier, Timothy Jay Smith, Arcade Publishing
- The Nowhere, Chris Gill, PRNTD Publishing
- The Quaker, Liam McIlvanney, Europa Editions/World Noir
- Rewind, Marshall Thornton, Kenmore Books
- Royal Street Reveillon, Greg Herren, Bold Strokes Books

Lesbian Memoir/Biography

• *Long Live the Tribe of Fatherless Girls,* T Kira Madden, Bloomsbury Publishing

- *Motherland: A Memoir of Love, Loathing, and Longing,* Elissa Altman, Ballantine Books
- Ordinary Girls, Jaquira Díaz, Algonquin Books of Chapel Hill
- The Rib Joint: A Memoir In Essays, Julia Koets, Red Hen Press
- Sontag: Her Life and Work, Benjamin Moser, Ecco
- Wayward Lives, Beautiful Experiments: Intimate Histories of Social Upheaval, Saidiya Hartman, W. W. Norton & Company
- We Have Always Been Here: A Queer Muslim Memoir, Samra Habib, Viking Canada
- A Wild and Precious Life, Edie Windsor with Joshua Lyon, St. Martin's Press

Gay Memoir/Biography

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- *The Amphitheater of the Dead,* Guy Hocquenghem, translated by Max Fox, Guillotine
- *DISASTERAMA! Adventures in the Queer Underground 1977-1997,* Alvin Orloff, Three Rooms Press
- How We Fight for Our Lives, Saeed Jones, Simon & Schuster
- I.M., Isaac Mizrahi, Flatiron Books
- In the Shadow of the Bridge, Joseph Caldwell, Delphinium Books
- Indefinite Sentence: A Personal History of Outlawed Love and Sex, Siddharth Dube, Atria Books
- Jimmy Neurosis, James Oseland, Ecco
- The Light Years, Chris Rush, Farrar, Straus and Giroux

Lesbian Romance

- Aurora's Angel: A Dark Fantasy Romance, Emily Noon, Bluefire Books
- Create a Life to Love, Erin Zak, Bold Strokes Books

- Once Ghosted, Twice Shy, Alyssa Cole, Avon Impulse
- Pretending in Paradise, M. Ullrich, Bold Strokes Books
- The Roommate Arrangement, Jae, Ylva Publishing
- The Secret Chord, Virginia Hale, Bella Books
- Tennessee Whiskey, Donna K. Ford, Bold Strokes Books
- Top of Her Game, M. Ullrich, Bold Strokes Books

Gay Romance

- Best Man, Chris Delyani, Self-published
- Blue Umbrella Sky, Rick R. Reed, Dreamspinner Press
- Code Name: Liberty, Marshall Thornton, Kenmore Books
- Digging Deep, Jay Hogan, Dreamspinner Press
- Escaping Camp Roosevelt, Bryan T. Clark, Cornbread Publishing
- Joseph Chapman: My Molly Life, James Lovejoy, Self-published
- Kiss Me Again, Garrett Leigh, Fox Love Press
- My Baby Chased Away the Blues, R.A. Thorn, NineStar Press

LGBTQ Anthology

- *The BreakBeat Poets Volume 3: Halal if You Hear Me*, Fatimah Asghar and Safia Elhillo, Haymarket Books
- Foglifter Volume 4 Issue 2, Luiza Flynn-Goodlett, Foglifter Press
- The Heart of the Matter: The Gerald Kraak Anthology Volume III, The Other Foundation, Jacana Media
- *Hustling Verse: An Anthology of Sex Workers' Poetry*, Amber Dawn and Justin Ducharme, Arsenal Pulp Press
- *LGBTQ Fiction and Poetry from Appalachia*, Jeff Mann and Julia Watts, West Virginia University Press

- Love WITH Accountability: Digging up the Roots of Child Sexual Abuse, Aishah Shahidah Simmons, AK Press
- *Nonbinary: Memoirs of Gender and Identity,* Micah Rajunov and Scott Duane, Columbia University Press
- A Rainbow Thread: An Anthology of Queer Jewish Texts from the First Century to 1969, Noam Sienna, Print-O-Craft

LGBTQ Children's/Young Adult

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- All the Things We Do in the Dark, Saundra Mitchell, HarperTeen
- *The Grief Keeper,* Alexandra Villasante, G.P. Putnam's Sons Books for Young Readers
- Hazel's Theory of Evolution, Lisa Jenn Bigelow, HarperCollins
- *Hurricane Season,* Nicole Melleby, Algonquin Young Readers
- *The Meaning of Birds,* Jaye Robin Brown, HarperTeen
- Pet, Akwaeke Emezi, Make Me a World
- Pride Colors, Robin Stevenson, Orca Book Publishers
- Wilder Girls, Rory Power, Delacorte Press

LGBTQ Comics

- Are You Listening?, Tillie Walden, First Second
- Cannonball, Kelsey Wroten, Uncivilized Books
- Death Threat, Vivek Shraya, illustrated by Ness Lee, Arsenal Pulp Press
- Is This How You See Me?, Jaime Hernandez, Fantagraphics Books
- Laura Dean Keeps Breaking Up With Me, Mariko Tamaki, illustrated by Rosemary Valero O'Connell, First Second

LGBTQ Drama

- The Amateurs, Jordan Harrison, Samuel French, Inc.
- Dr. Ride's American Beach House, Liza Birkenmeier, produced by Ars Nova
- A Strange Loop, Michael R. Jackson, produced by Playwrights Horizons

LGBTQ Erotica

- Lord of the Senses, Vikram Kolmannskog, Team Angelica Publishing
- Lot's Wife: An Erotic Novella, Rosalind Chase, Under Hill Press
- The Shape of the Earth, Gary Garth McCann, Bold Strokes Books
- Texas Crude, Thomas Kearnes, Lethe Press
- Whore Foods, LA Warman, Inpatient Press

LGBTQ Science Fiction/Fantasy/Horror

- Black Leopard, Red Wolf, Marlon James, Riverhead Books
- The Deep, Rivers Solomon, Daveed Diggs, William Hutson, and Jonathan Snipes, Gallery / Saga Press
- False Bingo, Jac Jemc, Farrar, Straus and Giroux
- The Priory of the Orange Tree, Samantha Shannon, Bloomsbury Publishing
- The Rampant, Julie C. Day, Aqueduct Press
- A Spectral Hue, Craig Laurance Gidney, Word Horde
- Stories to Sing in the Dark, Matthew Bright, Lethe Press
- Wake, Siren, Nina MacLaughlin, Farrar, Straus and Giroux

LGBTQ Studies

- All Our Trials: Prisons, Policing, and the Feminist Fight to End Violence, Emily L. Thuma, University of Illinois Press
- Archiving an Epidemic: Art, AIDS, and the Queer Chicanx Avant-Garde, Robb Hernández, New York University Press

- Beside You in Time: Sense Methods and Queer Sociabilities in the American Nineteenth Century, Elizabeth Freeman, Duke University Press
- Queer Times, Black Futures, Kara Keeling, New York University Press
- Queering Black Atlantic Religions: Transcorporeality in Candomblé, Santería and Vodou, Roberto Strongman, Duke University Press
- *Reading Sideways: The Queer Politics of Art in Modern American Fiction,* Dana Seitler, Fordham University Press
- Scorpio Rising: A Queer Film Classic, R.L. Cagle, Arsenal Pulp Press
- *Trans Exploits: Trans of Color Cultures and Technologies in Movement,* Jian Neo Chen, Duke University Press

The winners will be celebrated live in ceremony on Monday, June 8 in New York City at the NYU Skirball Center for the Performing Arts. The emcee for the evening? Bowen Yang, *Saturday Night Live*'s newest cast member. Imagine a mashup of the SAG Awards, the National Book Awards, and the Tonys (presenters have been known to break out in song), and you might get a sense of what this jubilee has in store.

"There is really nothing like being at the ceremony,"author and editor Rakesh Satyal tells OprahMag.com. Back in 2009, Satyal won a Lammy for his novel *Blue Boy*. "It is such a powerful and heartening and entertaining demonstration of what makes books so vital to our culture and to our identities. Seeing so many people who love LGBTQ+ literature and want to celebrate it in one place, on one night, reminds us that books are often the best and most effective tools for understanding the world and our commitment to social justice."

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Satyal said that winning the Lammy was "perhaps the first time in my career that I thought, 'Oh, wow—I am really doing this. I am really a writer.' It's difficult to feel validated in a creative field in the first place, but when you come from marginalized backgrounds, it can seem all the more impossible to find a sense of community or a sense of true worth. Holding that award and thinking that others wanted to recognize something I had written was immeasurably empowering."

Tickets for the Lambda Literary Awards ceremony, VIP cocktail reception, and afterparty are on sale here. Many of the proceeds from ticket sales Lambda Literary's Writers-in-Schools program, which has brought LGBTQ books and authors to over 7,000 students throughout New York City, and the Writer's Retreat for Emerging LGBTQ Voices, the only multi-genre writing residency exclusively for emerging LGBTQ writers.

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