

2021 Over the Rainbow Fiction and Poetry Longlist

By Jane Sandberg <https://www.glbtrt.ala.org/overtherainbow/archives/726>

After Rubén. Francisco Aragón. Red Hen Press, 2020. Poems and essays inspired by and in conversation with Nicaraguan writer Rubén Darío.

Amora: Stories. Natalia Borges Polesso, translated by Julia Sanches. Amazon Crossing, 2020. The translations in this book are about love between women in various types of relationships. The strength of these stories is in the everyday life writing, the capture of truths in daily moments.

Box Hill: A story of low self-esteem. Mars-Jones, Adam. New Directions, 2020. On his eighteenth birthday, awkward, clueless Colin literally stumbles upon the confident Ray, a motorcycle-riding "daddy," 10 years his senior, and thus begins a transformative relationship. On the surface, *Box Hill* is a sexy gay-male romance about a dominant-submissive relationship, but told with a depth and humor that make it a unique and moving coming-of-age tale.

Cut to Bloom. Arhm Choi Wild. Write Bloody Publishing, 2020. This poem collection looks to explore identities, that of a Korean American and of a queer person. This collection dives into the devastation of trauma and the process by which one can recover and bloom from those same wounds.

The Death of Vivek Oji. Akwaeke Emezi. Riverhead Books, 2020. This novel told from multiple perspectives looks back on the events that lead up to the death of Vivek Oji. The book showcases the experiences of characters with various queer identities in modern day Nigeria and illustrates how efforts to protect can sometimes be as damaging as any threat.

Dispatch: Poems. Cameron Awkward-Rich. Persea, 2019. Poems offered through the lens of the poets that came before, to explore bodies and self navigating a world of violence and disruption.

The Foley Artist: Stories. Ricco Villanueva Siasoco. Gaudy Boy, 2020. Nine short stories that explore the intersectional identities of the Filipino diaspora in America as they interrogate intimacy, foreignness, and silence in an absurd world.

The Gospel of Breaking. Christmas, Jillian. Arsenal Pulp Press, 2020. A deeply-felt, wide-ranging collection of poetry, taking on topics of racism, politics, love, and family history. Fierce and funny, the book is a celebratory, revelatory word-fest.

Guillotine: Poems. Eduardo C. Corral. Graywolf Press, 2020. Poems exploring gay male life and the experiences of migrants trying to enter America.

Harrow the Ninth. Tamsyn Muir. Tor.com, 2020. Harrowhawk Nonagesimus is the last necromancer of the Ninth House and, as such, has been drafted into an unwinnable war. Now she must become a perfect angel of death even while her health and mind seem to be simultaneously failing her and her own weapon seems to be making her sick. To truly summarize this book in a few words, it is gothic lesbian necromancers in space and all of the drama that comes with such an epic story.

Homesick: Stories. Nino Cipri. Dzanc Books, 2019. An eclectic mix of short stories across genres from romance to horror to science fiction that includes multiple queer identities and characters across the gender spectrum.

Homie: Poems. Danez Smith. Graywolf Press, 2020. Poetry that explores queerness, friendship, family, illness, race, and death in America.

Indigo. Ellen Bass. Copper Canyon Press, 2020. Indigo's poems roll off of the tongue and materialize in the mind. Thought-provoking and honest, this work will make you re-evaluate all of your relationships with others and yourself. Clear and precise, Bass poses questions while conjuring eternal themes of life, death, love, and yes, food.

Invisible Kingdom, Volume 1: Walking the Path. G. Willow Wilson with artist Christian Ward. Berger Books, 2019. This sci-fi saga focuses on two very different sects of one society and a small rogue spaceship on the run from both. It also draws the focus on two women from very different backgrounds and how their fates collide and connect with each other — and how the knowledge they unveil could change the very core of their society.

Junebat. John Elizabeth Stintzi. House of Anansi Press, 2020. This collection is a journey through identity exploration, specifically gender, of folding and unfolding, of becoming, of others seeing what you see or feel, and all the emotions and self-doubt that can go along with it. Also featured are a curious junebat, and Hale-Bopp, the queer cactus.

Little Blue Encyclopedia (For Vivian). Plante, Hazel Jane. Metonymy Press, 2019. The narrator, mourning the loss of her beloved friend Vivian, begins a project of writing about Vivian's favorite TV show, the fictional *Little Blue*, as a way of remembering and memorializing her friend. Writing about the TV show in encyclopedic form provides a framework for a deep dive into the show, which reveals the life of her friend all the more. Unconventional in form, yet highly readable; playful and with a love of pop culture, the book is a celebration of friendship between trans women.

The Malevolent Volume. Justin Phillip Reed. Coffee House Press, 2020. Reed's works are in conversation with other poems, mythology, and effuse emotion and experience.

Plain Bad Heroines. Emily M. Danforth. William Morrow, 2020. A queer, feminist horror-comedy centered on the deaths of five young women at a cursed New England boarding school for girls and the horror film now being shot on the school grounds.

The Prettiest Star. Carter Sickels. Hub City Press, 2020. In the final stages of AIDS, Brian Jackson returns to his small Ohio hometown from New York City in 1986 after a six year absence. The story is told in shifting perspectives from Brian, his mother, and his younger sister. The book showcases the fullness of life in the throes of illness and the potential and limits for growth and forgiveness.

Real Life. Brandon Taylor. Riverhead Books, 2020. Wallace is a young, black man from Alabama attending a Midwestern university to earn his biochem degree. Wallace also happens to be queer. These facts have led to him being understandably distanced even within his circle of friends until the events of one weekend threaten that distance as well as expose very real threats. This book discusses homophobia and racism in a very real way while also delving deeply into the helplessness and trauma that can come along with those experiences.

The Seep. Porter, Chana. Soho Press, 2020. Not your typical alien invaders, The Seep, have brought not destruction, but utopia, to Earth. Trina Goldberg-Oneka, a fifty-year-old trans woman, and her wife Deebea, are living a seemingly nice life under The Seep, with capitalism gone and where anything seems possible, until Deebea decides she wants to be reborn which, yes, is possible. Heartbroken at the loss of Deebea, and questioning utopia, Trina goes on a quest to save a lost boy from The Seep.

Shine Of The Ever. Foster, Claire Rudy. Interlude Press, 2019. Set in Portland in the 1990s, and described as a "literary mixtape," *Shine of the Ever* is a collection of witty, bittersweet

vignettes about characters young and queer, searching for love and community, making mistakes and sometimes succumbing to insecurities, yet doing it all in style.

The Subtweet. Vivek Shraya. ECW Press, 2020. The story starts with one musician covering the song of another, leading to a friendship that strains when one becomes more famous than the other. The author shows how texts and social media can complicate relationships, and how music can unite and divide.

This Town Sleeps. Dennis E. Staples. Counterpoint, 2020. A romantic mystery, with a supernatural twist, set on an Ojibwe reservation in northern Minnesota, involving Marion, a midtwenties gay Ojibwe man, and his old high school classmate, the closeted, and white, Shannon. Drawn back to his hometown for reasons he can't explain, Marion enters into a complicated relationship with Shannon, and becomes entangled in the mystery of another classmate who was murdered years earlier.

Thrown in the Throat. Benjamin Garcia. Milkweed Editions, 2020. A fantastic debut of poetry by the son of Mexican immigrants breaks down the walls and boldly questions who belongs—in closets or in countries—and how and why do either exist?

Upright Women Wanted. Sarah Gailey. Tom Doherty Associates/Tor, 2020. An amazingly queer romp into an imagined future American Southwest which follows a stowaway young woman and the antifascist librarians that she runs away with.

Vera Kelly Is Not a Mystery. Rosalie Knecht. Tin House Books, 2020. After losing her job and having her girlfriend leave her, Vera Kelly sets up a private detective agency and her first case involves a lost foster child, political intrigue and the internal workings of the Dominican community in the US.

You Exist Too Much. Zaina Arafat. Catapult, 2020. A story told in vignettes that goes between the U.S. and the Middle East while following the life of a Palestinian-American woman who when she comes out as queer to her mother is simply told that she exists too much. This book is a powerful look into queerness, trauma, mental, illness, and familial relationships as well as how all of these things affect someone's search for love.

Honorable mentions

- *Boyfriend Material.* Alexis Hall. Sourcebooks Casablanca, 2020.
- *The House in the Cerulean Sea.* TJ Klune. Tor Books, 2020.
- *The Kill Club.* Wendy Heard. Mira Books, 2019.