

# **Queer(ing) Fantasy: The Lady of Fire**

**ANGELO RAHME**  
**Supervised by Dr. Sleiman El Hajj**  
**Lebanese American University**

**Lebanese American University**

**Plagiarism Policy Compliance Statement**

I certify that I have read and understood LAU's Plagiarism Policy. I understand that failure to comply with this Policy can lead to academic and disciplinary actions against me.

This work is substantially my own, and to the extent that any part of this work is not my own I have indicated that by acknowledging its sources.

Name: Angelo Rahme

Signature: Angelo R.

Date: April 27, 2021

## Contents

Abstract .....	3
Novella .....	4
The Lady of Fire: The effects of marginalization, and challenging heteronormative and hegemonic ideologies.....	14
Introduction .....	14
Literature Review .....	14
Analysis .....	17
Growing up a witch in a mortal world.....	17
The shifting of gender roles.....	23
Fantasy comes from our everyday life .....	26
Conclusion .....	30
Bibliography .....	32

## Abstract

Since I was young, I was completely fascinated by everything fantasy. Whether at school, at work, at home, and even out with friends, I would find it relaxing as I drifted away into my own internal world full of magic. This was a way to escape the difficult reality of knowing I would never be accepted by my surroundings. I searched for validation in my own dream world, and with the opportunity to narrate this world creatively, I have noticed how it truly reflects my deepest feelings. I thus asked the following questions: How can fantasy writing portray the different stages of a gay man's life in a repressive context? How can the fantasy genre play a role in fighting back sexism? How does a fantasy character convey, through the supernatural, pertinent social problems from everyday life? In "queering" this novella, I have explored through fantasy writing, and its concomitant analysis, the stages of a gay man's life, and the role of shifting gender roles in fighting sexism and other social problems. Queer fantasy literature predominantly centers around LGBTQ+ characters as key protagonists. What is different however in my work is that I have illustrated the different stages of a gay man's life through a quest of self-discovery forged by the protagonist, a heterosexual female. Ultimately, although there are similarities between my novella and earlier queer fantasy writing, my work is more of an analogy of how the world treats, not only the LGBTQ+ community, but also different marginalized groups that are discriminated against.

*Keywords: Queering fantasy, LGBTQ+, sexism, feminism, marginalization, stages of a gay man's life.*

## Novella

*The Lady of Fire*

The lady of fire, some called her, and others the mistress of the skies. Whatever name she went by she was deeply revered, or maybe a better word for it, would be feared. She lived with her growing family, on an island both verdant and mountainous. A family of creatures that were known to live solitary lives. Creatures that she gathered and united from every corner of the world, creating a new kind of group. A group unheard of since the beginning of time, a group... of dragons. From water dragons with breaths of ice, that could swim just as well as they could fly, to the mighty fire drakes, whose breaths could melt even the strongest metals, and whose wings could send men flying, with gusts of wind as strong as hurricanes. Just like a family they looked out for each other, brought food, played together, and lived in complete harmony. And just like a mother she looked out for them, along with her mate, Nar, the lord of all dragons, the most powerful and ancient of them all.

She often pondered on what to name this new group. If eagles in those rare occasions when they met were called a convocation, and if crows who gathered often at a site of death had earned the name of murder, what then could she name her family? What could be brought to mind when one sees a group of mighty dragons flying about or lying still basking in the sun? A thunder? A flight? She thought of pandemonium, but that was already given to parrots, and anyway she didn't want a word with any negative connotations. She wanted to correct the notion that people had about dragons. They weren't some bloodthirsty animals that killed on sight, but kind and loving beings that were, just like her, misunderstood.

Other times her thoughts would wander back to her past life, to most unfortunate times before she became who she was today, the queen of dragons. She would think back on her childhood in her hometown of Salvisa, how she was rejected and mistreated by her friends. Well, they weren't really her friends, they constantly avoided her and bullied her, all because of who her mother was; the town witch. Although she did nothing but help the townspeople, healing them and offering them medicine, they would have nothing to do with a witch. Because according to them all magic was born of darkness, and those who practiced it were considered impious. Her daughter Melinda inherited her gift, and even a little more. She could do things even her mother couldn't, including the ability to talk to animals. The other kids were not impressed by this, it actually made them fear her even more. They didn't understand magic, they only knew what their parents told them about it, or better yet, warned them about it. So, no matter what kind of wonders it could do, it was surely the devils' work.

There was however a little girl who was not afraid of Melinda, in fact she was her best friend. When the other kids made fun of her and sometimes even hit her, Cara was always by her side, standing up for her and consoling her. They would often wander about the forest together, talking to the animals and playing with them. They enjoyed their time away from town, where there was no one to bother them, with only the trees and the creatures that dwelt among them keeping them company.

"Isn't it beautiful Melinda? What you can do? Look at these beautiful animals, the way they love you, how sweet and kind they are," Cara told her.

"If only the rest of the town thought as you, they will always hate me and my mom."

"Don't worry, I'm sure someday they will see in you what I see. A beautiful friend."

They played for hours in the woods each day; one day, however, Cara strayed a bit too far from Melinda, when they were playing a game of hide and seek. And not all the animals in the woods were friendly, especially when not under Melinda's charm. Cara got lost, and stumbled upon a mama bear and her cubs. The bear protecting her children saw her as a threat and attacked her. Melinda found her just in time and made the bear back down, but not before it had scratched her arm. She was badly hurt, so Melinda took her back to her mother so she could heal her. Back in town Melinda's mother, Maia, started working on a healing balm, when Cara's mother stormed in the house and snatched her away. A roaming peddler had reported seeing the two girls returning to the witch's house with Cara bleeding. Cara's mother shrieked when she saw her daughter's arm and accused the witches of harming her. Cara tried to explain to her but she would not listen, and Maia tried to give her the balm to heal the wound but she wanted nothing to do with her witchcraft. She took her daughter and left, forbidding her from ever seeing Melinda again.

The next day while Melinda was coming back from the market, she stumbled upon a gathering in the town square. General Atrox, who was in charge of the protection of Salvisa was addressing the people, getting them riled up. He had been publicly speaking against witch-kind for many years. He hated witches above all else, and his deep-rooted hostility scared Melinda. It did not matter to him if it was a good witch like Melinda or her mother; in his eyes they were all evil, and deserved nothing but death. He would even go hunting them in the woods, where witches usually lived, away from people, even when they were causing no harm at all.

Melinda didn't know why he hated them so much, much more than the others. She often heard stories about his brother being a warlock as well, like their father, back when witches were still not considered abominations. Atrox never felt he could live up to him, his brother was always his mother's favorite. No matter what Atrox did, he always lived in his brother's shadow, and when witches began being persecuted, Atrox himself led a mob to kill his own brother. His mother never forgave him, and since then he hated witches all the more. They were hated so much that they didn't dare come anywhere near any village or town.

Not all witches were evil however; some like Melinda's mother chose to defy this rivalry and live amongst mortal kind offering them her help. She even married a mortal man, who died not very long after Melinda's birth. People were then even more skeptical about her. Her husband was the only tie she had with their world, and even with him alive they gave her a hard time. After his passing, rumors surfaced about one of her spells going wrong and killing him.

Next to the general stood lieutenant Dulcis. Melinda liked him, as much as she hated Atrox. He was always kind to her, helped her and her mother, and in many ways, he was the reason they still lived in this town unharmed. He stood up for them in front of everyone, even defying his general. And as much as Atrox and the people despised having the witch live among them, Dulcis made it clear that they couldn't touch her unless she actually hurt someone or committed a crime. As far as they knew she was the town healer and even though they disliked her methods, some of them, including Dulcis, actually went to her for medical help, not without the risk of course of being deemed impious themselves. But today was a different matter, the people got furious at what happened to Cara, and general Atrox saw this as the perfect opportunity to get rid of the witches.

"Her daughter would spend all day in the woods with one of our own," said General Atrox to the angry crowd. "I sent two of my men after them and they reported seeing her speak

to the animals. And then they come back with our child wounded by bear claws. Do you need more proof of the danger they pose to us? To our children?"

The crowd roared with anger and approval at the general's words. Melinda got scared and started to run home when she bumped into the kids that always bullied her. They scolded her as well and called her names, and blamed her for Cara's injuries. They attacked her and started hitting her. She wanted to hurt them, but didn't. When she went back home scared and in tears, she told her mother everything.

"I wanted to hurt them so badly mama," she said with tears still running down her face.

"I know my baby," her mother replied, "but just because you have the power to hurt someone, doesn't mean that you have to. Or you would be no better than them. Violence only creates more violence, trust me you will understand it one day, but revenge is never the answer."

She did indeed have the power. She could easily hurt them, but she listened to her mother's advice. Melinda was also telling her mother about what Atrax was doing in the town square, when they heard the screams of a mob outside, and loud bangs on the door. The whole town was at their doorstep, brandishing their torches and pitchforks in the air, demanding that the witches be burned. Melinda and Maia went out to meet them.

"There she is," screamed Cara's mother, "she's a danger to us all."

"Mother please, it wasn't her fault," Cara said crying.

"Shut up," her mother replied, "look at your arm, you think next time it would be this easy? You'd lose it entirely, or worse."

"Burn them," a man shouted from the raging crowd.

"You will not touch one hair off my daughter's head," Maia yelled. "She is just a child, and she meant no harm. If you want to get to her, you'll have to go through me."

She knew their fear of magic, and that they would do anything to avoid its consequences. She didn't want to hurt anyone, but when it came to her daughter, she had no choice. She would curse the entire town. But Atrax was not so easily frightened. He dealt with witches his whole life, and was overly confident in his power to wipe them out.

"Do not listen to her threats," Atrax yelled back, "if we keep her alive then this town is truly doomed!"

"Then take me," Maia replied, "I will go willingly, but leave my daughter, she is a child."

"Just kill the mother," shouted someone else from the crowd, "it is her evil upbringing that is leading her girl astray."

"No!" Melinda screamed.

"It's alright my baby," Maia whispered to Melinda. "It's all going to be alright."

They took her away in front of her screaming daughter, to the town square where they had prepared the stake on which they wanted to burn her. Melinda was held by two men, screaming as she saw her mother dragged up there. She watched with tears as the flames beneath her mother ignited, spreading slowly to her body. But on Maia's dying lips she could make out her final words before the flames engulfed her entirely.

"Stay kind."

Nar noticed Melinda drifting away in her thoughts, on the peak of her mountain on the dragon isle. He asked her if she was ok, but she did not reply.

"You are thinking about that town again," the dragon said in his deep growling voice.

"They hurt me so much, and yet I chose to forgive," she said.

“We have talked about this my love, do not trouble your mind with undeserving fools. You have grown so powerful over the years, with dragon blood coursing through your veins, yet you remained humble and wise. I know you miss your friend, but this is for the best, they will never accept us.”

“I do not seek their acceptance, only justice.”

“There is a fine line between revenge and justice, do not seek the first and disguise it as the latter.”

“I try to get them out of my mind, but their hate haunts me when I sleep. I hear my mother’s screams and see her each time I close my eyes.”

“It is indeed confounding what humans are capable of. They fight off what they think is evil, with evil acts of their own. They made you feel fundamentally flawed, made you think there was something wrong with you. You grew up with that, and unless you learn to love yourself, you will never be able to forgive them.”

“You are right my love, but what they did to me was unforgivable.”

“What they did to you was bring you to me, I’m sure you can forgive them for that.”

“Do not twist my words!” She chuckled. “You know very well what they did, how they tried so hard to make me one of them, and jumped at the first opportunity to get rid of me.”

“They made you a nun, if I am not mistaken.” Nar laughed.

And indeed, they had done. This got her thinking again, to when she was taken after that traumatizing day to the town’s monastery where she was raised by the nuns. They taught her their sacred scriptures, familiarized her with their rituals and rites, and infused her with their teachings. They believed that all magic came from the evil god, and that to practice it, to try and compare oneself with the mighty deities, was blasphemy. A pure life is lived through service to the higher powers of heaven. To the gods and goddesses that watched over the townspeople and protected them as long as they remained faithful and worshiped them. They did not dare to incur their anger.

She lived there most of her life, brainwashed into giving up all her memories of magic and her mother. She acted like the well-behaved little girl they wanted her to be. In about a year, she was allowed again to see her best friend Cara, to play with her in the confines of the monastery.

“Did they really make you forget your magic?” Cara asked her.

“Don’t worry, they can’t take it away from me, it’s who I am. They say it’s evil, but mom always told me it was a gift.”

The nuns considered her stay with them her novitiate, and trained her throughout the years to become one of them. By making her a nun, she would give up everything from her past life, they thought, and take vows of chastity and purity. Melinda had no choice but to be obedient, for she knew that the mother superior and General Atrox were always watching her. But in her mind, she knew she would get away someday and leave all this behind her.

On the day of her initiation, when she was supposed to take her vows, she waited by the window with a few of her animal friends keeping her company, like they did for many years during her stay there. She would talk and sing to them softly, for other than Cara they were the only ones who could comfort her. She finally took her vows and became a nun, and was given a certain degree of freedom; she could now go wherever she wanted for a limited time. When she wasn’t performing her duties, or visiting Cara who was now married, she often went into the

woods to talk and play with her friends, and seek the solace she never found among her own kind.

Melinda laughed as she resumed the conversation with Nar.

“Yes... yes they tried to make me a nun.”

“And then they found you about the forest still practicing your magic and talking with the animals.”

“The mother superior and General Atrox never let me out of their sight. One day the mother superior followed me into the forest and came at me furiously when she saw me with the animals, one of the wolves attacked her, and since that day my fate was sealed.”

“You were to be sacrificed to the dragon,” he said amused.

“Which reminds me. You talk to me about doing the right thing yet you terrorized that town and countless others for years, asking them to sacrifice their youths to you each time you returned. As a price for their salvation.”

“I did that because I spent millennia searching for a queen, I knew that someone they were willing to sacrifice would most probably be her. An outcast, someone... different.” Nar looked out into the distance and then resumed. “I have done my share of wrong in this world. But you were the one that changed me, and gave me another chance. That’s why I ask you to do the same for them.”

She looked into his deep golden eyes and was swept back to the first time she laid eyes on them. The first day they met, she had been chained at the mouth of a huge cavern in the mountains, awaiting a gruesome fate. She was alone, waiting as she stared into the dark abyss in front of her. She stood motionless, yet a small shiver ran through her spine; out of the cave came a cold breeze that chilled her to the bones. Soon she heard breathing, and the breeze she felt was now warm. Yellow eyes glowed in the darkness, and what she saw next filled her with awe and dread. The dragon emerged from the darkness, towering above her. Birds that seem to have been perched on his horns flew away, and with a deep voice he spoke:

“So... you are the one they sent me this time. Did they do it with regret, or were they glad to be rid of you?”

Melinda couldn’t stop staring at the magnificence of this creature, his scales were a light grey, and his teeth as sharp as blades. After a few moments she found the strength to speak.

“They couldn’t be any happier now that they are rid of me.”

With a huge step the dragon came out of the cavern and looked her right in the eyes.

“And why is it that they hated you so much little mortal.”

“I am not just a mere mortal.”

And just as she said that, although she wasn’t the one who made it happen, and as if to prove her point, the animals of the forest gathered around her to protect her. she was just as astonished as the dragon, who actually seemed to enjoy himself.

“A sorceress,” he growled, “and one in tune with the spirits of nature. I knew I felt something about you, I could smell it miles away. The birds have told me of such a creature wandering about the woods.”

“So, you’ve heard about me.”

“And judging by the beasts that surround you, it seems that you are after all well-loved, by creatures much wiser than mortals.”

“I have found in them what I could never find among my own kind.”

“Oh, but my dearest, the humans were never your own kind, you are different, more magnificent than any of them. But I have a question for you. Such a powerful being stands before me, and yet you did not stop them from bringing you here, you came willingly. Why? Weren't you afraid?”

Melinda had watched his mountain for years, envying his power and freedom. And wondering when he will come back and with him the next sacrifice, for she knew in her heart that it was sure to be her. She was afraid, yet she was in awe of the dragon, and waited for the day she could finally meet him. Staring out at his mountain from her window in the monastery, she had been too afraid to go on her own.

“I have talked to many creatures in my lifetime,” she finally said, “but I have never talked with a dragon. And though everyone can understand you, for you can speak the human tongue, as old dragons are known to, I wanted still without any use of magic, to come face to face with you.”

“You are brave indeed little sorceress,” he replied, “but you surely knew I was dangerous, and that you may not survive this encounter. Wouldn't you rather be living with them, than dead with me?”

“Though wicked they think you are, mighty dragon, I do not believe you are wickeder than they are. There are many evils in this world, but the darkest of these live in human hearts.”

The great dragon looked at her for a while, as if examining her from the inside out. His eyes seemed to peer right into her soul, and in that moment, she felt so vulnerable, so exposed, as if naked in front of his burning eyes. Suddenly he took a step closer to her, and the animals around her readied themselves for an attack; but the dragon ripped the chains off the ground and lowered his head so that she could climb. She hesitated for a moment and then stepped up on his head, held on as tight as she could, and then he took off, taking her north far away from the town.

It wasn't very long till they reached an island near the coast; on that island was the dragon's lair, within the highest mountain. Inside, Melinda's eyes widened and gleamed as they reflected the mountains of gold and jewels. The result of centuries of plunder by the dragon.

“Welcome to my home,” he said.

Melinda was speechless, and it was a few moments before she managed to get out two words:

“It's beautiful.”

“Allow me to properly introduce myself.”

As he said that, she did not believe what happened next. In front of her eyes, she saw the dragon shrink and change form. Slowly taking on a human shape, but with the dragon features still visible. His skin was covered in scales and his wings were still there, but aside from the golden eyes and slightly sharp cheekbones, his face was completely human.

“My name is Nar,” he said, “lord of the dragons.”

She stood motionless, baffled at the transformation she had just witnessed.

“Can all dragons do this?” she asked.

“Only if they're as old and powerful as I am.”

“Why have you brought me here?”

“Because I have seen in you something, I have not seen for thousands of years... a queen.”

Without another word he came closer to her, so close that she could feel his hot breath rolling on her skin. His arms wrapped around her and he pulled her even closer as he leaned in to kiss her.

“What will happen to me?” she asked, her breath caught in her lungs.

“You will become... the future.”

His embrace felt so comforting; the feeling of someone holding her like that was completely alien to her. That someone being a dragon lord made it all the more mystifying. She never felt safer or more powerful, although she still felt a little fear. It did not last long, however. Very soon her clothes fell off as he stripped her naked, and they both lay down on a big linen cushion with silken sheets above the mountains of gold. She let him take complete control, and they stayed together all night. As Nar spread his mighty wings and let out a powerful roar that shook the entire mountain from within, she felt power inside her, coursing through her body. For a short time, she felt as if she was burning from the inside, but it did not hurt, it felt good. And for a few fleeting moments she saw scales cover her entire body. They lay next to each other for a long time with his arms wrapped around her. After a while she was tired and fell asleep, and all-night Nar had slept next to her in humanoid form, covering her with his wings; and for the first time in her life, she had slept feeling, completely and utterly, safe.

And this is how she always felt with him, especially as her family grew, from the children she bore him to the mighty dragons she gathered from all around. She had earned the title of queen of dragons. She oversaw the protection of her family, and did the humans a big favor by keeping dragons away from them, for both their sakes. Even though all those years passed and she still thought about her past life, she had never really forgiven the townspeople, but always kept her mother’s voice conciliatory in the back of her mind.

As Melinda and Nar sat there still talking and enjoying the sun, they heard a billowing shriek. Egan, one of their children, came flying lamely towards them. She immediately jumped up and the young dragon fell in front of her. She ran to him and held him. Young dragons couldn’t speak the human tongue, but she understood him all the same: “Humans!”

He and his siblings were hunting off the island and ran into soldiers that attacked them. Melinda asked him where his brother and sister were, and he pointed her in the direction of the scene of the crime. Her wings immediately sprouted from her back as she leapt off the mountain top with lightning speed to the location her son had pointed out. Nar took human form, keeping his wings, and followed her. She finally heard the scream of one of her children coming from below. It was Ryu her other son. She dived down quickly to where it was coming from and saw him standing above his sister’s body. She did not want to believe it at first, but as she drew closer, she saw her; Kaida, her daughter, lying dead on the ground with her brother weeping next to her. She was beaten and bloody.

Melinda held her in her arms, as tears started to fill up in her eyes. She had experienced loss before but never the loss of a child. She just knelt there staring at her daughter’s battered corpse. A single tear fell from her eye, turning to fire as it touched the ground, scorching the soil beneath her. She let out a scream of agony that resounded through the entire forest, a scream worthy of a ferocious dragon. She swore she would find the ones responsible, then as she looked on the ground next to the dead child, she saw a shield with a very familiar coat of arms emblazoned on it. That of Salvisa, her original home town. Anger boiled inside of her; fire was filling her lungs. She had forgiven them so much; they had killed her mother in front of her, alienated her, mocked her, stolen her childhood, and sent her to her doom, yet she always held back. But now they had killed her daughter, and she realized that they would never leave her alone, no matter how hard she tried to escape. Those monsters are beyond forgiveness, beyond

any act of kindness, and they would soon feel the weight of her wrath. If they thought they were afraid before, she was now going to show them the true meaning of fear.

Tonight, was the night that Melinda would strike. General Atrox had pushed her to the limit, she knew in her heart that it was his doing, that once he found out that the dragon had not killed her but brought her with him, he'd keep hunting them to the ends of the earth. And now he had killed one of her children, and awakened the monster he had fought so hard to keep away.

Silently, her dragons flew through the night. She sent the sea drakes swimming for a surprise attack from beneath the ocean, and as the night was still, out of the water they leapt to the docks, attacking everything and everyone in their path. From the sky dove the fire drakes, raining chaos on the unsuspecting town. Blood-red flames lit the night, as the townspeople screamed and ran for their lives. Then through the red tainted blackness of the sky came Melinda, riding the most ferocious dragon of them all, her mate the great dragon Nar. They soared through the sky, as Melinda took her draconian appearance. Scales covered her body within seconds, and great wings sprouted from her back lit in all their magnificence by Nar's unquenchable flames. And above the entire town she could be seen in all her glory as the mother of all dragons, the lady of fire.

The city burned. The people screamed. And among the flames Atrox stood sword in hand surrounded by his warriors. Some were busy fighting off the water dragons by the docks, but were soon turned into statues of ice. Others were saving the families from the flames, and the bravest fought the fire drakes in the streets. They were able to take down a few of them with their ballistae, firing huge bolts made from the strongest metals able to penetrate their hides. But the fight did not last long, the dragons overpowered them. Soon, everyone was running for their lives, except for Atrox who stood defiantly amidst the chaos, too proud to flee. Melinda saw him from the skies and jumped off the dragon lords' back and dove through the air with great speed, landing gracefully among the flames, as the strength of her wings cleared them away. She was finally face to face with the general. A moment she had dreamt of for a long time, and he probably had as well.

"You monster!" he shouted at her from the flames.

At the sound of that word her blood boiled.

"You dare call me a monster, when that title clearly belongs to you!" she shouted back.

"Me?" he replied, "look at what you've done, don't you see the death and destruction you have brought?"

"You killed my mother, you took away my childhood, you made sure I lived here miserably, and when I finally got away from you, and was living a peaceful life, you follow me and kill my child, tell me who the real monster is?"

"It was only a matter of time before you attacked us anyway, it is in your nature."

Her eyes glowed bright red like the flames around her. Her wings stretched wide behind her, and her claws were out and sharp and thirsty for blood. She ran and with a leap glided towards him, fought off every blow he threw her way, and then knocked away his sword. She grabbed him by the throat and lifted him off the ground. She was ready to sink her claws right into his chest and rip his heart out. When she suddenly heard a familiar voice cry out her name.

"Melinda!"

She turned to see who it was and found Cara covered in black soot and burned everywhere. She was holding her also burned children in her arms.

"Cara..." Melinda's voice choked as she said her name.

“What have you done?” Cara shouted. “Stop this madness! Why are you doing this?”

“They took everything from me!” she shouted back. “You were there Cara; you saw it all. And now they have killed one of my children! Tell me, what am *I* doing wrong?”

“You are now killing theirs!”

At that Melinda stood still, an expression of realization dawned on her face. She looked around her and saw the people terrified. Their houses burned down, women clutching their burned children, some crying over the ones they lost, burned beyond recognition. She saw children crying over their charred parents, orphaned and all alone. Suddenly she saw her own mother through the flames, tied to a wooden pole and being burned alive in front of her eyes again. She remembered her mother’s last words before she was consumed by the fire. She saw her lips muttering them again.

“Stay kind.”

Tears ran down her face. She threw Atrax to the ground and screamed so loud the entire town heard her, it was as if they heard the painful roar of a dragon. It made the dragons stop and come back to her side. She fell to her knees and as she hit the ground, she cleared with a wave of magic all of the flames across the town. The damage was already done, and she could not bring back the dead. She wept on the ground and Cara ran up to her.

“All I wanted was to be happy, to be myself, to live in peace, why couldn’t they just have left me alone?” she told Cara as tears ran down her face.

Mayhem was all around her. The promise made to her mother, broken. She felt like the monster they said she was; she had allowed them to turn her into that monster. Cara knelt next to her trying to comfort her, as she did all those years ago when the other kids bullied her. But Melinda just wept and wept. The dragons tried to comfort her as well, and Nar came down to her in human form to try and do the same.

Suddenly they heard a scream coming closer and closer, and saw general Atrax running towards them his blade aloft. All around her the dragons stood ready to protect her, although she felt she did not deserve their protection. She just wanted it to end, to die and join her mother wherever she was. But before they even had a chance, a blade struck Atrax’s. It was Dulcis, the lieutenant that was always kind and sweet to Melinda. She raised her head and saw him protecting her. She was utterly flustered and bewildered.

“General Atrax,” he said, “you are under arrest for putting our town and its inhabitants in mortal danger.”

“What are you talking about Dulcis? It is her that put the town in danger, look around you, this is all her doing, she attacked us!”

“Only because you attacked her first. You can only push someone so far before they break, and she did what any mother would do to protect her young. You awakened the monster within her, the one you feared so much. The most ferocious monster you could ever encounter, a mother.”

“You’ll never get away with this Dulcis.”

“Look at you Atrax, still consumed by envy and fear.”

“Me? Afraid? Of what?”

“Of yourself, you act strong yet you’ve always felt inferior. Whether to your brother, or anyone else you saw as a threat.”

“You’ve always been soft, Dulcis.”

“And you’ve always been weak. Take him away,” he said as he handed him to his soldiers.

He then walked toward Melinda with an outstretched arm. She looked up at him with her swollen eyes, then grabbed his hand and stood up along with Cara and Narr who stayed by her side.

“Why?” asked Melinda.

“You’re still the same person I knew long ago Melinda, just a little girl searching for a family.”

She looked him in the eyes and saw how sincere and kind he truly was, a man with a heart of gold. She looked all around her and saw the people looking at her, half in fear and half in confusion.

“Let me help,” she told him finally.

He gave her a nod and she went over to a terrified family nearby.

“Shh... it will be alright,” she reassured them. And with a wave of her hand, she healed their wounds. She then turned to the town and spoke with a mighty voice.

“I cannot bring back your dead, and I do not ask for your forgiveness, for what I have done is unforgivable. But if you let me, I can heal your wounds and help you rebuild.”

A group of people came towards her, and when she saw them clearly, she recognized them, even covered in soot. The childhood kids that used to bully her and hit her.

“We were horrible towards you,” one of them said, “and we are the ones that do not deserve your forgiveness.”

“We would be honored if you would help us, and accept our apology. The dead can’t be brought back, but wounds can heal, given the proper care,” said another.

“So many kids are now orphans because of me,” she said.

“And you became one because of us,” another replied.

She looked at them and smiled, filled with both guilt and happiness. But she knew in her heart that this was the beginning of something wonderful. Without further delay she set out and began healing the town. The sea drakes helped her, for they were adept at healing magic, and the process of rebuilding began shortly after the town had healed and began to recover.

Humans and dragons worked together for the first time in history. And since that day forward, the town was renamed *Draconia*, in honor of the dragons and their queen, who healed their wounds. Not just the wounds of the flesh, but the ones that were deep-cut in their souls. And they were always welcome in town, as humans were welcome on their island, and so began a beautiful friendship. With all that had happened, a perfect name came to Melinda, for her own group of dragons, for it embodied what she believed in and what her mother had given her life to teach her. She would call them... a benignity.

## The Lady of Fire: The effects of marginalization, and challenging heteronormative and hegemonic ideologies.

### Introduction

Fantasy was always my escape route, my way out. Everywhere I felt out of place, at school, at work, even at home. The rare occasions where I wasn't out in my own private world were when I was with my friends, because among them I would feel safe and accepted. This constant anxiety and feeling of not belonging drove me to create my own safe space within the arms of fantasy. The world I had created gave me a sense of validation that I wasn't able to get from the real world around me. I knew I was different from the beginning, and being gay in a straight man's world is an exceptionally hard journey. Escaping through fantasy as I said, brought me validation even if only in my own head, it gave me joy and a sense of fulfillment. I didn't know any better at first, as I grew up, I thought of trying to change my sexuality, because it's what made me different and unaccepted. It is only after I grew up that I learned that it is this difference that allows me to thrive. To do so we must find a way through this world that affords us our share of happiness, joy, fulfillment, and love, because that is how one becomes a fulfilled gay man, not by trying to become straight (Downs, 2012).

Watching fantasy movies and reading fantasy stories were another way I felt I could escape, it felt so good to immerse myself in a different world, and with time I learned to write down the countless worlds that I created in my mind. And just like any human being, I relate to what is familiar. I've heard so many people say that they don't like to watch or read fantasy, because it "isn't real" and consequently they couldn't connect with it. I'm not saying that creating a good fantasy world is easy, one that allows you to be completely immersed within it. But one of the keys to be able to do that is by giving us something to connect to. In the end, all this fantasy draws from real life, and it is kind of like writing down your own journey, but through the eyes of a magical being, or a being living in a magical world. Because I believe that there is more to the world than meets the eye, and as Stephen Prickett has argued, George MacDonald believed that we as human beings live in two worlds. Constantly MacDonald creates places with borders, between what we know as "reality" and the fairy land, between past and present, heaven and earth, dream and waking, and between the imaginative and the reasoned (McGillis, 2003).

### Literature Review

Previous works have emphasized mostly how the LGBTQ+ community is treated within society, with main protagonists admitting their sexuality because it seemed trivial compared to what horrors the actual world contained. In *Weep for Day* by Indrapramit Das (2012), the protagonist Valyzia, seeks to explore the dark side of the world, where humans once regarded as evil, because it contained shadow creatures who were actually just as afraid of humans, as humans were of them. In her journal, talking to her deceased brother, who actively hunted these creatures and wanted to wipe them out, she tells him that Ilydrin, is a member of their expedition and her partner. And that among the empty city of a race they destroyed, to hide the truth of their

affection would be an obscenity. Here is shown the importance of tolerance and understanding, and the terrible consequences that hatred springing from fear is capable of. Valyzia talks about the stagnant moralities of their city-state, and how they appear trivial, as she gazes upon the beauty of their planet's second half. The second half is clearly the marginalized community that is discriminated against in our world. Through this she Unmasks constructions of gender and sexuality that are naturalized, resisting heteropatriarchal ideologies through tales of nonnormative subjects (Orme, 2010).

If the main problem was not protagonists admitting their sexual orientation, stories would be set in a world where sexuality was not the issue. But rather being comfortable is one's own skin was. In *The Night Bazaar for Women Becoming Reptiles* by Rachael K. Jones (2016), where by day one should be married to the opposite sex, but by night they had another life where they married someone of the same sex without it being a secret. The protagonist's main conflict was wanting to become a reptile by eating their eggs and thus transforming into them. It wouldn't work for her, and her only thoughts were "If she could be that kind of creature. If she could cross the desert. If she could break free of the spider silk bonds Oasis imposed, the thin invisible obligations tying woman to man to woman to child, a web which caught and snared." The bonds of society were the issue and not homosexuality, not even a patriarchal society.

Other works convey a different message still, that of the patriarchal society, weighing women down. In *Seasons of Glass and Iron* by Amal El-Mohtar (2016), there is an LGBT theme as the two women protagonists fall in love at the end, by the main idea was to show the abusive treatment that society bestows on them. Magic in this short story acts as the patriarchal restrictions imposed on women, because both the protagonists, Amira and Tabitha, are restricted by it. Tabitha has to wear down 7 pairs of iron slippers as punishment from her bear husband, and Amira sits atop a glass hill unable to move, because her father doesn't want her to marry so he can keep the kingdom under his control. Amira does not want any man to touch her anyway and so she agrees. As Tabitha walks in the iron shoes, she thinks back to the shoes her brothers have worn. "A pair of seven-leagued boots, tooled in soft leather; winged sandals; satin slippers that turned one invisible." Whereas her shoes made it so difficult for her to travel she thought of how strange it was that they got to wear shoes that lightened their steps and helped them discover the world, not hindered them as her iron shoes do. This clearly shows the advantages that men have in the world, and how women are weighed down by their authority. "Perhaps, she thinks, it isn't strange at all: why shouldn't shoes help their wearers travel? Perhaps, she thinks, what's strange is the shoes women are made to wear: shoes of glass; shoes of paper; shoes of iron heated red-hot; shoes to dance to death in."

In *The Gentleman of Chaos* by A. Merc Rustad, Vessai is the king's sister and he holds her under his will by a magical collar, and he calls her "She" not thinking she deserves a name. She was the most powerful warrior in the land and yet under her brothers control, this is how magic also represents the patriarchal society. but in the story at the end, she tells her brother that this collar never really hindered her, because she was Vessai, "and now the gentleman of chaos." And she tells the king that "magic only binds the true self."

Many literatures tackle the problem of queerness and otherness, using "queer" as a term of resistance that goes beyond LGBT issues and sexual orientation. Moussawi & Vidal-Ortiz

(2020), redefine the term queer to suggest opposition to hegemony and oppression suffered by a wider cross section of minorities and marginalized groups. Such as people of color, LGBTs, and women in patriarchy. The queer fantasy short fiction I have read mostly tackle LGBT, and women in the patriarchy, as does mine. The difference however in that in my story *The Lady of Fire* it is not so explicitly stated, but is revealed through its “queering.” Deconstructing normativity and multiple aspects of lived experience is what queer analysis is about (Moussawi & Vidal-Ortiz, 2020). Reading queerly also requires us to create meaning that express nonnormative desires, by going beyond, but not abandoning, the tools of rational analysis (Seifert, 2015). Perhaps by trying to queer Indrapramit Das’s *Weep for Day* (2012), we could interpret the following excerpt as showing the way people judge what they do not know as evil, and not worthy of being in this world, for example, marginalized groups:

*His jaw knotted, he glared down at our intertwined hands. His grip was limp now. “Don’t start with your theories about the benevolence of Nightmares. I don’t want to hear it. They’re not scared, they are fear, and we’ll wipe them off the planet if need be so that you and everybody else can live without that fear.”*

What distinguishes my work is the very methodology: using a comprehensive creative-critical approach, whereby the study consists of both a fantasy novella and a detailed reflection on its research questions. Of course, when reading any story, different people may interpret it in different ways, as Turner (2015) hopes, when he asks if the way he reads a story about a witch and a girl is different from the way someone else reads it. This method has been applied when studying fairy tales such as those of Oscar Wilde and George MacDonald, but never in an actual fantasy short story. The study of McGillis (2003) shows that MacDonald is a writer that clearly tries to challenge notions of gender perceived as conventional. He “queers” the notion of gender, but also takes great caution to keep male and female distinctly separate. By queer is meant what MacDonald meant by the word along with his contemporaries. That which is confusing or puzzling, synonym to “strange,” “peculiar,” “odd,” and even “different.” Or as Carol Tattersall as mentioned in Duffy (2001) says about Oscar Wilde’s fairy tales, that they present an “attempt to address their own marginal status as genre, and the notion of marginality in general.” In short, queer reading practices exposes the unfamiliar, the unexpected the unpredictable sides of sexuality, gender, and structures of domination more generally, working against the predictable, the familiar and the expected (Seifert, 2015).

My research questions therefore are: How can fantasy writing portray the different stages of a gay man’s life in a repressive context? How can the fantasy genre play a role in fighting back sexism? How does a fantasy character convey, through the supernatural, pertinent social problems from everyday life?

By analyzing this novella using the concept of “queering” fantasy, the general findings were that through fantasy writing, which people think of usually as unrelated to real life, there was depicted my internal struggle in dealing with society, by highlighting the stages a gay man goes through in life. Stages that are clearly listed and explained in *The Velvet Rage: Overcoming the Pain of Growing Up Gay in a Straight Man’s World* by Alan Downs (2012). Moreover, as we combine different marginalized groups, and think of the protagonist’s status of being a witch as

the “gay man,” but as her apparent gender as representing women in a patriarchal society, we can also see how this genre plays a role in fighting back sexism as well. As illustrated in the fairy tales mentioned above, and by Puechner (2016), as she talks about her own journey in such a society where divorce is frowned upon and describing it as having lost her “prince charming” in the eyes of her loved ones. Furthermore, all this supports that the supernatural might not be seen as what it really is at first read, but delving deeper into the text shows how a fantasy character conveys the struggles and social problems from everyday life, because in the end fantasy writing comes from no magical source, but from real life.

## Analysis

“The truth is rarely pure and never simple.”

OSCAR WILDE

The Importance of Being Earnest

As mentioned before, the word “queer” encompasses the whole range of marginalized groups, regardless of sexual orientation. In this study as I attempt to “queer” my novella, I focus mostly on two such groups. First of all, the “gay man” in particular because the journey I depict is similar to mine and many others, as mentioned in Alan Downs book. Secondly, I also focus on women in a patriarchal society, but shifting gender roles as George MacDonald does in his fairy tales.

Melinda’s journey in *The Lady of Fire* represents in a large way the journey of these two groups. But as I mentioned earlier the way each person reads a story about a witch will be different. And as Duffy (2001) mentions about the fairy tales of Oscar Wilde, they “deliberately resist unitary readings,” they sprawl out in different thematic directions, and undercut themselves at the moment they appear to arrive at a clear moral. My reading of this novella is therefore similar to Duffy’s (2001) reading of Wilde’s fairy tales, who is “optimistic about the possibility of educating readers on the merits of male love.” And in this case also about the merits of the woman. Why fantasy we ask again? Maybe just as Duffy (2001) suggests that Wilde’s fairy tale genre may serve as an emblem of his “metaphorical youth.” “Or it may point to the metaphorical (i.e., moral) infancy of those whom Wilde proposes to educate.”

## Growing up a witch in a mortal world

Since the beginning, Melinda has struggled to live in a town where she knows she is not accepted. She and her mother are witches, and even though her mother does nothing but help the townspeople, she is still regarded with disdain.

*Well, they weren’t really her friends, they constantly avoided her and bullied her, all because of who her mother was; the town witch. Although she did nothing but help the townspeople, healing*

*them and offering them medicine, they would have nothing to do with a witch. Because according to them all magic was born of darkness, and those who practiced it were considered impious.*

Focusing more on Melinda, we notice a clear pattern from what Downs (2012) terms “stage one” of a gay man’s life. Although in stage one a gay boy usually hides his sexuality, or even doesn’t know why he’s different, he knows it all the same. Similarly, here Melinda knows her difference, and the cruelty of the other kids disables her, making her feel flawed. Truly the cruelest behaviors you can witness are those of children. They are probably the most keenly aware of the differences in one another, more than other people, and they often give a very hard time to children they see as different, tormenting them. Children are merciless, especially when they sense difference in each other, some of the cruelest human behavior can be seen while watching a kindergarten playground (Downs, 2012).

Melinda was not only different from her peers, but even from her mother. She loved her mother but understood her difference, because the people around her never failed to remind her of it. This difference is familiar in a gay boy’s life, and the fear of rejection by our parents, coupled with the abuse suffered at the hands of our peers, engrained in us a very harsh lesson: something about us was “disgusting, aberrant, and essentially unlovable” (Downs, 2012).

*Her daughter Melinda inherited her gift, and even a little more. She could do things even her mother couldn’t, including the ability to talk to animals. The other kids were not impressed by this, it actually made them fear her even more. They didn’t understand magic, they only knew what their parents told them about it, or better yet, warned them about it. So, no matter what kind of wonders it could do, it was surely the devils’ work.*

Melinda’s mother Maia was there to nurture her, but her father wasn’t.

*She even married a mortal man, who died not very long after Melinda’s birth. People were then even more skeptical about her. Her husband was the only tie she had with their world, and even with him alive they gave her a hard time. After his passing, rumors surfaced about one of her spells going wrong and killing him.*

It is no secret that anyone must have both their parents present in their lives in order to grow up in a healthy way. As Downs (2012) puts it, it’s “the natural and organic expectation of a boy.” He adds that for many of us, this agreement, that was written right into “the genetic code of our souls” was broken at an early age. where were they then? When all this was happening? They weren’t there to teach us to love ourselves, be honest with ourselves, they didn’t see the fear in our eyes, they didn’t see our dilemma, nor take us by the hand and teach us to calm our anxiety (Down, 2012).

Not all of us lost their fathers physically of course, sometimes they were present but the emotional connection that should have been there was lost, because of our perceived differences and our inability to talk with them. Our mother’s saw this difference as Downs says and tried to compensate for the lack of love we should have been receiving from our fathers, and the betrayal she saw us suffer, making us overly attached to her, receiving the only authentic validation from

her. What she valued were different, more feminine qualities and these qualities of our true self were validated the most. This isn't true for everyone of course, some had their fathers emotionally present regardless of their sexuality, but it was true for most. This overattachment to our mothers allowed us to cultivate our creative and compassionate and nurturing talents, resulting in a better-developed tender side. Even becoming more comfortable in the company of women (Down, 2012). Explaining here Melinda's best friend Cara, and the nurturing talents being her magic and her love of animals to who she could speak to. Also, it relates to the fact that I chose my protagonist as a female, and as we will later see the passiveness of the male character.

Therefore, as Melinda perceived herself as flawed, and after they had killed her mother, she stopped fighting back, and accepted reluctantly as they forced her to become a nun and conform to their society's values.

*She lived there most of her life, brainwashed into giving up all her memories of magic and her mother. She acted like the well-behaved little girl they wanted her to be.*

She became their puppet, allowing them to pull her strings making her act in "acceptable" ways, knowing deep inside that she couldn't trust herself (Downs, 2012). Because she thought she was responsible for hurting her friend Cara, and for the death of her mother.

Afterwards, Melinda did not conform to the rules they had forced upon her. She disobeyed them once again and this resulted in the wounding of the Mother Superior at the covenant.

*"The mother superior and General Atrox never let me out of their sight. One day the mother superior followed me into the forest and came at me furiously when she saw me with the animals, one of the wolves attacked her, and since that day my fate was sealed."*

Not conforming to what society wants her to be she was condemned to be sacrificed to the dragon. But Melinda wasn't afraid of him, it was what she wanted, to come face to face with this magnificent creature. To show the world who she really was.

*"I have talked to many creatures in my lifetime," she finally said, "but I have never talked with a dragon. And though everyone can understand you, for you can speak the human tongue, as old dragons are known to, I wanted still without any use of magic, to come face to face with you."*

This translates to stage two in Down's book. The gay man who is no longer trying to hide his sexuality, still feels that there is something wrong. And thus, we seek love and acceptance from the world around us. We are still driven by those unquenchable, juvenile drives for love and acceptance, we learn to be something we think is more acceptable to those around us (Downs, 2012). I believe that this practice of hiding who we truly are is very common, in *Weep for Day* by Indrapramit Das the protagonist describes the creatures they call Nightmares, explaining how folklore started associating them with real nightmares:

*We named bad dreams after them because we thought Nightmares were their source, that they sent spies into the city to infect our minds and keep us afraid of the dark, their domain. According to folklore, these spies could be glimpsed upon waking abruptly. Indeed, I'd seen*

*them crouching malevolently in the corner of the bedroom, wreathed in the shadows that were their home, slinking away with impossible speed once I looked at them.*

The fact that these creatures disappear with such speed as one looks at them could be read “queerly” and understood as how the gay man does the impossible to chase the “nightmare” of his true self away, never revealing it to anyone. And if anyone glimpses it by mistake they slink “away with impossible speed...”

And so, Melinda became the queen of dragons, the lady of fire. Translating in real life to the success that the gay man wants to achieve in order to receive the validation he so thirsts for. And with this dragon she knew that she could achieve greatness, she wanted to know what would become of her after she lay with him.

*“What will happen to me?” she asked, her breath caught in her lungs.  
“You will become... the future.”*

And indeed, she did, as the whole world began to know her name and fear her, she thought that she was finally content, and that she had achieved the greatness she had sought.

*The lady of fire, some called her, and others the mistress of the skies. Whatever name she went by she was deeply revered, or maybe a better word for it, would be feared.*

As Downs’ (2012) puts it, to earn the love and affection she craved, she became dependent on her environment. On the skin it imposed on her in order to get the love and affection she wanted. or in this case “fear.” What do you want to be? Downs asks, a great student? A priest? Mother’s little man? The first-chair violinist? In Melinda’s case, the queen of dragons? But how could we love ourselves when everything around us told us we were unlovable? (Downs, 2012).

From the beginning of the story Melinda ponders from atop her mountain home, filled with dragons from all over the land. She thinks back at her old life, as if she wasn’t satisfied with all that she had accomplished. She misses her friend, and wishes that things could have been different. She talks with her new mate Nar, the old dragon, and it clearly shows that she hasn’t moved on.

*“I try to get them out of my mind, but their hate haunts me when I sleep. I hear my mother’s screams and see her each time I close my eyes.”*

*“It is indeed confounding what humans are capable of. They fight off what they think is evil, with evil acts of their own. They made you feel fundamentally flawed, made you think there was something wrong with you. You grew up with that, and unless you learn to love yourself, you will never be able to forgive them.”*

*“You are right my love, but what they did to me was unforgivable.”*

It is clear that Melinda has not forgiven them yet for what they have done to her. the anger that boils inside her is the same one that boils inside the gay man. She grew up disabled, not because she was a witch, but because her environment taught her that she was unacceptable. So does the gay man grow up disabled, not because of his sexuality, but the same reason as Melinda, believing he is not a “real” man, and he is therefore, shameful (Downs, 2012).

Nar tells her that they made her feel fundamentally flawed. This is what Downs says about the young gay boy who is not equipped to fight off this trauma and exposure to overwhelming shame; he then internalized this shame into the core belief that he is as Melinda perceives herself, unacceptably flawed. So is revealed the deepest secret that Melinda or the gay man never admit, their own self-hatred.

This is why Melinda does not seem to ever be satisfied, she just sits there and thinks back at her past life, wondering what she could have done. Even if she was now on top of the world, “her pursuit of validation is never satisfied” (Downs, 2012). “All [s]he accomplishes satisfies for only a passing moment before the relentless hunger for more that is better burns once again” (Downs, 2012).

As Melinda is unable to quench her thirst for validation, any source of invalidation tears her apart. So, inside, her rage is growing. The thing that made her attack the village where she was born was no mere incident, or small source of invalidation, they had killed one of her children and she was bound to get revenge. The idea here is that the source of her rage was justified, I believe, however, that Melinda was waiting for the slightest excuse in order to attack, it just so happened that the excuse was not slight. Because as Downs (2012) says, as the gay man is continuously unable to satisfy his needs, rage emerges, and his tolerance for invalidation like Melinda’s has become dangerously low, and his hunger for that same validation becomes all-consuming. The harmful effect of shame and rage when they occur are the result of us not being accustomed to them and therefore cannot control them, so we feel them with an intensity beyond what the circumstances merit (Downs, 2012). Melinda’s circumstances merit a lot of rage of course, but her consequent actions went way too far.

*“What have you done?” Cara shouted. “Stop this madness! Why are you doing this?”*  
*“They took everything from me!” she shouted back. “You were there Cara; you saw it all. And now they have killed one of my children! Tell me, what am I doing wrong?”*  
*“You are now killing theirs!”*

She wanted to show them how powerful she really was. Making obvious the second stage we are talking about as described in Downs’ book, where we are over the shame brought by our sexuality, and are overcome with the belief that we are fundamentally flawed. “We grab the nearest brightest flag” in my story’s case, marrying a dragon, and we draw in the attention, that we think will satisfy us and validate us. We feel this burning rage at the world for making us feel this way, and the shame of our sexuality, we want to show them all that we are great, because if everyone believes it, aren’t we? (Downs, 2012). Therefore, Melinda is not satisfied with her life because she does not love herself. She seeks the validation from all around her, but where she should be looking is inside herself. She is like “a hamster on a treadmill who runs incessantly but will never go anywhere” (Downs, 2012).

Now we follow Melinda as she climbs out of stage two into stage three as described in Downs’ book. The depression she felt in that stage and her erratic behavior begin to alleviate once she understands what she must truly do, echoed by the voice of her mother:

*She remembered her mother's last words before she was consumed by the fire. She saw her lips muttering them again.  
"Stay kind."*

She has to completely change her life, renouncing what was most dear and sacred, and preserving only what is real and honest, through "the simple process of rediscovering the essence of the self" (Downs, 2012). And so, she faces her shame, she sees the people that threw her out hurting because of her, she killed their children, and left others orphans, just because she couldn't accept who she truly was. Facing this toxic shame is extremely hard to do, it shakes our very soul, leaving us horrified by the truth, which is that we know nothing of who we truly are (Downs, 2012). It is this exposure to shame as Downs states, that helps us recover, because being exposed to any hard feeling will eventually diminish its power over us. And "when we stand and face the wicked witch, she dissolves under the power of our steadfast gaze" (Downs, 2012). Downs states in his book [p. 52]:

*The end of stage two is inevitably the dark night of the soul for the gay man. It is a time when he may untie every anchor to his small vessel. Relationships are often ended. Career choices are frequently questioned. Friendships are dismissed. The meaning of life is rejected, revised, destroyed, and reinvented. And while the extent to which a gay man displays this angst upon his face and life may vary, the internal process is always tough and grim. Some retreat into a period of mostly silent contemplation. Others become activated, expressing their struggle to all who will hear. Each slight variation of personality has its own way of expressing the process, but the result is the same: elimination of shame and the birth of authenticity.*

Hence the emotions and experiences that Melinda faces. After she had attacked the town, she felt great distress, everything in her life had changed, and she was able to eliminate her shame and birth inside of her, her true and authentic self.

*She looked at them and smiled, filled with both guilt and happiness. But she knew in her heart that this was the beginning of something wonderful. Without further delay she set out and began healing the town. The sea drakes helped her, for they were adept at healing magic, and the process of rebuilding began shortly after the town had healed and began to recover.*

Therefore, Melinda is now equipped with better weapons to manage her emotions, which is the love and acceptance of those around her. she no longer feels the suffocating effect of her old behaviors, as does the gay man who crosses the boundary between stages two and three, beginning to live in real authenticity leaving the inauthentic behind and becomes himself; "a true self that is shown to all the world for the flawed beauty therein" (Downs, 2012).

One important factor to achieve this is passing through what Downs describes as "the crisis of meaning." He describes this as no longer needing to gild life with the extraordinary, and no longer needing to compensate for shame, And reaching a place full of honest and radical authenticity. As Downs (2012) puts it "it is what is it." You have to accept yourself and your situation as it is in the moment if you want to be happy. This doesn't mean you can't thrive for what is better, but to do so contently you need acceptance, and just be you, someone imperfect with the potential for both good and evil (Down, 2012). Stage three is "the final good-bye of

toxic shame and the beginning of a life that is truly worth living” (Downs, 2012). Then the validation we receive from the world for being who we truly are is the validation that actually lasts, satisfying the deep longing from within, when rage finally dissipates, because of authentic validation (Downs, 2012).

Therefore, as Melinda finally understood, there is nothing that this world can do to hurt her, or undermine who she truly is, when she actually loves herself. “At the end of it all, what matters most is being at peace with ourselves, and nothing more” (Downs, 2012). Melinda figured that out at the end of her story where she finally knew that staying kind as her dying mother had told her, is the key to lasting joy. Furthermore, as she was in the beginning of the story contemplating names for her group of dragons, suggesting things that are loud like “thunder,” or things that are scary like “murder,” or “pandemonium,” she finally understood that it is not the loud and scary that will get her noticed and loved in this world, but quite the contrary, what is silent and everlasting, finally deciding to call them a “benignity.”

*Humans and dragons worked together for the first time in history. And since that day foreword, the town was renamed Draconia, in honor of the dragons and their queen, who healed their wounds. Not just the wounds of the flesh, but the ones that were deep-cut in their souls. And they were always welcome in town, as humans were welcome on their island, and so began a beautiful friendship. With all that had happened, a perfect name came to Melinda, for her own group of dragons, for it embodied what she believed in and what her mother had given her life to teach her. She would call them... a benignity.*

### **The shifting of gender roles**

When we think of fantasy we think of fairy tales, and when we think of fairy tales, we think of a love story most of the time. If asked to define a fairy tale, the general answer would be about love, but mostly heterosexual love, as they are known to enshrine these notions, which is why there arises a need to “queer” them (Seifert, 2015). And when we think of such stories, we tend to remember the women in them as “damsels in distress” awaiting their prince charming to come and save them.

In my novella, the story is being presented from a female’s point of view, although this is true of most fairy tales, the woman never really transmits them from her own perspective of being independent. When that happens, then the male-dominated society is faced with a challenge, by the sensibility of these tales (McGillis, 2003). As we have said, the female is usually passive in these tales and the males come to their rescue. And as McGillis (2003) set out to “queer” George MacDonald’s fairy tales, he noticed that MacDonald gives his female characters agency, while making the male ones more passive and thus having more “feminine” qualities, instead of being the knights in shining armor skilled in the arts of war. As McGillis states, MacDonald challenges the normative gender roles, without moving beyond his culture’s norms when depicting these two sexes.

This is true for Melinda as well, putting aside the fact that being a “witch” in the context of my novella replaces being a “gay man,” she is however, still a woman. Some might think of her

story as another one of those damsels in distress ones, when she needed the help of Nar the dragon in order to escape. But Nar here represents her own success, and she is later shown to be the more dominant one in the story. Whenever there is a problem, she is the first one to rush straight into the fire, with Nar passively following her wherever she goes, not executing much action. Like when for example she goes off to help her children when she hears that they are in danger.

*Her wings immediately sprouted from her back as she leapt off the mountain top with lightning speed to the location her son had pointed out. Nar took human form, keeping his wings, and followed her.*

Nar in the whole story basically does nothing but follow her around, and giving her advice as would a female character do in a traditional fairy tale. At first this did not seem the case in the story, as Melinda was the one in need of saving and then the mighty dragon stepped in. Much like in MacDonald's stories, the first impression in that males seem to be represented in masculine characteristics such as "daylight, work, rationality, physicality, travel, and leadership," and the females with more feminine ones such as "moonlight, contemplation, imagination, spirituality, domesticity, and passivity" (McGillis, 2003). Accordingly, this is how Melinda and Nar are represented at first. Nar has swept her away from the world which rejects her,

*Yellow eyes glowed in the darkness, and what she saw next filled her with awe and dread. The dragon emerged from the darkness, towering above her.*

...

*The great dragon looked at her for a while, as if examining her from the inside out. His eyes seemed to peer right into her soul, and in that moment, she felt so vulnerable, so exposed, as if naked in front of his burning eyes. Suddenly he took a step closer to her, and the animals around her readied themselves for an attack; but the dragon ripped the chains off the ground and lowered his head so that she could climb.*

and she spends her days in imagination and contemplation about her past. Here we realize that, "the witch understands that as much power as the villagers have bestowed upon her, they also hold over her" (Orme, 2010). In *The Lady of Fire*, we see Melinda as:

*She often pondered on what to name this new group.*

...

*Other times her thoughts would wander back to her past life, to most unfortunate times before she became who she was today, the queen of dragons.*

It is no secret that men have had it easier than women in our world for a long time, and it still is the case today. Such power is afforded to men in fairy tales, and such arduous journeys to women. One of MacDonald's stories as seen in McGillis (2003) talks about the story of a boy named Mossy and a girl named Tangled, the story is called *The Golden Key*, and the protagonists have to go on a journey separately. The journey is much easier for Mossy than it is for Tangle, because he holds the key, which in this story carries phallic and spiritual implications. McGillis

talks about what Cynthia Marshall has pointed out in the story, questions regarding the difficulties each character must face. Why is it so much easier for the boy? Why must she wait for him even though she has arrived first to the destination? Why would the wise woman in the story show more respect to Mossy, just because he has the key? This shows the inequality that the two sexes face in the world. Here lies the resemblance with my story, as Melinda must endure a life of rejection and oppression, while Nar goes around freely asking villages for sacrifices. As Melinda asks him:

*“Which reminds me. You talk to me about doing the right thing yet you terrorized that town and countless others for years, asking them to sacrifice their youths to you each time you returned. As a price for their salvation.”*

Male and female need each other, as do all people, we are indeed equal but that does not rule out the fact that we are different. In all species there are roles given to both sexes, in lions for example it is the female which goes hunting while the male basks in the sun most of the day. The gender roles we have given ourselves however are social constructs, but they do stem from an intrinsic background, something belonging to our instincts. Which is why for example, men are stronger physically than women. I am not saying that we are not equal in every right, and that all the activities either of us do can be accomplished by either sex. However, there is a “unity in disparity” as McGillis (2003) states. “Male and female conjoin as do age and youth, fire and water, inside and outside, and yet such conjoining does not cancel difference” (McGillis, 2003).

I have noticed many similarities in my story and those of George MacDonald, about the relations between males and females as I have addressed above. How gender roles are sometimes reversed and how the disparity between them is highlighted. Another such resemblance is as McGillis (2003) says about his stories, that he constructs a type of male that is in need of a nurturing and “feminine” side as well as the instruction of women. This shows in my novella as well, as Nar is indeed in need of those sides, and this is why he spent so much time searching for his queen, in order to make his dragon kingdom, and himself grow and change.

*“I did that because I spent millennia searching for a queen, I knew that someone they were willing to sacrifice would most probably be her. An outcast, someone... different.” Nar looked out into the distance and then resumed. “I have done my share of wrong in this world. But you were the one that changed me, and gave me another chance. That’s why I ask you to do the same for them.”*

In MacDonald’s tale *The Day Boy and the Night Girl* from the (Complete Fairy tales 327) as quoted in McGillis (2003), the boy speaks “with the arrogance of all male creatures until they have been taught by the other kind.” McGillis continues to quote “they [both characters, Photogen and Nycteris] stood in the midst of the wide grassy land, neither of them able to move a step, each supported only by the leaning weakness of the other, each ready to fall if the other should move” (338). McGillis quotes these passages to show that neither male nor female can stand on their own, they are dependent on each other, with this interdependence reflecting the tales themselves (McGillis, 2003). Which also brings us back to my choice of fantasy for my novella, because as for MacDonald “the fairy tale’s very form is dependent upon the mutual

dependence of reality and fantasy, clarity and translucence, meaning and mystery” (McGillis, 2003). The same applies to my novella, as these opposing elements reflect the importance of fantasy to me personally, because through it, I find my escape, as my reality depends on my fantasy world.

By “queering” the fairy tale and in this case my novella, we participate as MacDonald does in “queering” gender norms. Preparing the way for contemporary writers such as David Almond, Terry Griggs, or Francesca Lia Block (McGillis, 2003). This transformation both joyful and playful by these writers upon such fiction, maintains the belief that old varieties brought about by a rigid masculine vision does not have to stand alone (McGillis, 2003).

In my novella I attempt to change in the minds of my readers the definition of gender and their roles. We live in a world that belongs to all of us no matter our gender, and we cannot survive without each other. As MacDonald, I try to participate in the reshaping of what it means to be a male, participating “in the ongoing struggle to create a world in which equality means justice, safety, and acceptance for all” (McGillis, 2003).

### **Fantasy comes from our everyday life**

As we have mentioned before, fairy tales and fantasy resist unitary readings. They can be interpreted in many different ways, each conveying a deep meaning hidden between the lines. As I have attempted to “queer” my novella, I have noticed many different aspects in which it can be interpreted, the first two being the two points we have discussed above. Still within the same range of marginalized groups, we notice other facets to the story. In my first section I talked about the stages that a gay man goes through in his life. And in the second about gender roles and how they are portrayed. In this section I will attempt to go even deeper and analyze other problems and difficulties that both homosexuals and women go through.

First of all, I am going to address gay love, comparing it to how Oscar Wilde depicts it in his fairy tales. I have talked before about how the term “witch” in my novella was associated with the term “gay.” Now as we keep this association, leaving behind the fact that Melinda is a woman and focusing only on the fact that she is a witch. Then we can talk about the dragon Nar as being her male lover. Both “witch” and “dragon” here meaning lovers of the same sex. Now as we all know, homosexual love is non-reproductive, and so viewed by many as being an abomination. I know that in my story the union between Melinda and Nar was reproductive, but not in the traditional sense. The offspring of this union were dragons and not human beings, so still in the eyes of society it is an abomination that is ultimately non-reproductive. In his fairy tales Wilde, like other supporters of male love “betrays a preoccupation with non-reproductivity” (Duffy, 2001). He casts these acts of non-reproductive love in his tales in a positive light to defy the ideology that it is reprehensible (Duffy, 2001). For example, as Duffy (2001) states concerning the story *The Fisherman and his Soul* by Oscar Wilde, that this story although revolving around the love of a fisherman and a mermaid, which at first glance seems

heterosexual, it is then twisted because the mermaid and the fisherman are from different species, and so this relationship is non-reproductive, falling into the category of sodomy (Duffy, 2001).

The witch and the dragon are both hated and feared in my story, their union is the product of evil, as is all magic seen by the people that cast the witch out. This translates into the hate and fear that our world has of homosexuality, believing it to bring damnation. As Duffy (2001) talks about Wilde's story *The Fisherman and his Soul*, he describes the scene where the fisherman goes to the priest in order to have his union with the mermaid blessed, but the priest refuses, calling this love "evil," "vile," "accursed," holding "perilous joys." He goes on to say that such a union is a sin that cannot be forgiven, and he must renounce his desires, because the Sea-folk are lost creatures and he who deals with them is also lost.

The love between the witch and the dragon, the fisherman and the mermaid, two people of the same sex, is obviously frowned upon by the world. This love between two people who cannot be blessed because of their sin, is in their eyes un-reproductive. However, at the end of my novella, the witch returns to her home along with her mate and children, and rebuild it healing the wounds of its people:

*Not just the wounds of the flesh, but the ones that were deep-cut in their souls.*

This therefore, can be seen as the real reproductive nature of this love. It heals the soul and brings out the beauty and kindness in other people. Similar again to *The Fisherman and his Soul* as Duffy (2001) explains, the priest refuses to bless the union which he perceives as "unnatural," because of its interspecies nature, cursing the Sea-folk and whoever lies with them. The fisherman however, loves the mermaid so much that he follows her into death. The priest orders them buried in an unmarked grave, saying "accursed were they in their lives, and accursed shall they be in their deaths also." But when he realizes that on that grave have miraculously bloomed beautiful flowers, which shows that this love is reproductive in a sense, and which prompts the priest to speak, not of God's wrath but of "the God whose name is Love." The priest then as stated by Duffy (2001), returns to the sea to bless it along with the Sea-folk and all that resides in God's world. The people were "filled with joy and wonder" by this gesture of universal acceptance. As finally the witch and the dragon are accepted by the others, even renaming the town "Draconia" in the honor of the queen who helped them.

In the second section I have talked about the different gender roles assigned to us by society and how I attempt to reverse them in my story. We can therefore highlight the inequalities present in many stories and especially fairy tales. As mentioned before the princess is always the damsel in distress in need of saving, and the prince charming is the one who saves the day. As Puechner (2016) mentions, a princess is always rewarded for her heterosexual union, her pleasantness and her subjugation with everlasting happiness. Puechner also talks about how the evil queen however, is always regarded with disdain, because she is the opposite of what women "should" be, the queen is the opposite of passive, she is clever, desiring, and of course magical. These witches are troublemakers, they have a queer sexuality, which is seductive and erotic, without the desire for men (Puechner, 2016). The queen is wild, greedy and selfish, they eliminate or weaken the king, because he represents the dominating patriarchal society, and so the queen is

often punished by death, because a strong woman is harmful to the proper upbringing of a child (Puechner, 2016). Which is why Melinda's mother was killed in the story, for being strong and powerful, for raising her daughter without a man, being independent, which of course makes her a witch.

*they weren't really her friends, they constantly avoided her and bullied her, all because of who her mother was; the town witch.*

...

*"Just kill the mother," shouted someone else from the crowd, "it is her evil upbringing that is leading her girl astray."*

How else are we to challenge our hegemonic society that views women, as well as any other minority group as inferior, then by providing a wide range of queer literature. Showing people through stories, that the world is not what it seems to be is one of the ways to change it. This will indeed take some time, but with persistence, even the strongest rocks are beaten down by the waves. As Orme (2010) explains in her analysis of Emma Donoghue's *Kissing the Witch*, the main character in one of the tales understands that a woman is not wicked for "refusing to do things queens are supposed to do," acknowledging at the end that "beauty is infinitely various." The narrator of the story is awakened to the subversion of the normalized codes insisting that women should find happiness with a husband, and heteronormative desires, and also to the subversion of the reading practices that view these discourse of desire as normal, natural, and inevitable (Orme, 2010). To resist hegemonic discourses, it takes a collective effort, and not everyone will be willing to participate in the process of reading queerly (Orme, 2010). But this is why we should never stop fighting for it.

Sometimes the protagonist of the story desires nothing from the world around them but to break free from the bondages of society. "The power and danger of social norms upon bodies, lives, and desires" as recalled in *The Tale of the Kiss* (Orme, 2010). A common theme between stories is one where the protagonist wants to break free of these norms and seeks solace away from their home. In *The Lady of Fire* Melinda is cast out but this is what she wants, and together with the dragon they live away from society. knowing that they will never be accepted.

*"We have talked about this my love, do not trouble your mind with undeserving fools. You have grown so powerful over the years, with dragon blood coursing through your veins, yet you remained humble and wise. I know you miss your friend, but this is for the best, they will never accept us."*

Similarly, in *The Night Bazaar for Women Becoming Reptiles* by Rachael K. Jones, the protagonist Hester, wishes for nothing than to be free of Oasis, the city where she lives, describing it as "a nest, a golden pot with an amethyst lid, trapping asps until the music plays, but it cannot hold her anymore." She can no longer take the pressure that society places upon her. it is not because of sexuality, because it is normal in this story to have two lovers each of a different sex, one by day and one by night.

*If only she had hatched from an egg. Reptiles needed no mothers or father. They birthed themselves and named themselves and no one kept them from the desert.*

A lot of women in this story wish to escape the confounds of the city, and apparently eating the eggs only works for women, as it transforms them into reptiles. She used to ask the women why they want to transform and received similar answers.

*“Because this body has grown too tight around me.”*

*“Because breathing weighs me down, and I am exhausted.”*

*“Because each night, I dream of walking into the desert and not returning.”*

Comparably, Orme (2010) Talks about how the witch relates her own various transformations. Being barren, she chooses to live away from her village in a cave because she is considered less than useless in her society. and of course, as Orme continues, the people believe her to be a witch, because who else would live on the outskirts of town. this is comparable to *Seasons of Glass and Iron* by Amal El-Mohtar, when the men cannot get to the princess on top of the glass hill, they call her a witch:

*As they slide down the hill, their horses foaming, legs twisted or shattered, they scream curses at her: the cunt, the witch, can't she see what she's doing to them, glass whore on a glass hill, they'll get her tomorrow, tomorrow, tomorrow.*

Orme (2010) continues and says that that power was given to her by the village, over time her needs became fewer, until she finally thought that she wanted for nothing, yet that state of mind is broken when she is kissed by a girl. Something similar also happens in *Seasons of Glass and Iron*:

*“On the hill,” says Amira, lips tight, “I want for nothing. I do not need food or drink or shelter. No one can touch me. That’s all I ever wanted—for no one to be able to touch me. So long as I sit here, and eat apples, and do not move, I have everything I want.”*

Until at the end, both girls break free of the magic that binds them, falling in love and beginning their journey together.

*“Where should we go?” whispers one to the other.*

*“Away,” she replies, and holding on to each other, they stumble into the spring, the wide world rising to meet them with the dawn.*

Orme (2010) says that the witch understood that it was loneliness that made her this way. And after the kiss she could not stop thinking about it, having taken the kiss, waking “into something unimaginable, having turned herself into some new species.” This echoes what Rachael K. Jones’ story reveals, that one is never really free until he breaks out of the carcass that envelops him and is born anew. As she mentions in her story:

*Her flesh feels heavy and cumbersome, and she thinks she could shake it loose, leave it behind to mummify in the heat and sand.*

...

*All over the city, people pitch and turn inside themselves, sliding against the smooth walls of their prison, but only a few buck against the shell and break it.*

In *The Lady of Fire* this is paralleled by her transformation after having copulated with the dragon:

*As Nar spread his mighty wings and let out a powerful roar that shook the entire mountain from within, she felt power inside her, coursing through her body. For a short time, she felt as if she was burning from the inside, but it did not hurt, it felt good. And for a few fleeting moments she saw scales cover her entire body.*

Like Hester *The Night Bazaar for Women Becoming Reptiles* Melinda broke free of the bonds of society and her body. Only the brave shed their skin and decide to live free of the bonds the community places upon them. Hester, like Melinda wants to escape, and that is what they do. With a new body able to survive in the outside world with no rules bounding them. The roles we are expected to take often bring us no joy, being different sometimes doesn't help us find happiness and fulfillment in the prescribed places of society. even Hester's sunside lover, her husband Marick, seeks to escape that reality. Although Hester tells him that the eggs only work for women, he is persistent and wants to try, even succeeding at the end. Making us think and challenge the normative ideologies that gender is the sex we are born with. The story reads:

*He casts his eyes toward the gutter, which is littered with tiny reptile prints. When he speaks, his voice is not a mango-seller's cries or a policeman's growl but trembling and weak, a flute cracked and leaking air. "I am done, trying to live in this body. It doesn't fit. Not with dayside lovers, or nightside lovers. Touches do not reach me. I wear my own flesh like a cloak, and I am alone inside. It isn't mine. Maybe I was supposed to be a reptile? A woman? Half a mother to complete some child? I do not know. I only know that if I don't shed this body, I will suffocate in it. Do you understand?"*

## **Conclusion**

I have read so many queer fantasy short stories and articles about analyzing fairy tales like those of George MacDonald and Oscar Wilde. Short stories usually focus on a particular facet of marginalized characters, and what I attempted to do in mine is to encompass as many facets as possible. Joining together the stages of a gay man's life, the oppression that women face, while at the same time challenging it, and other different obstacles that these two groups suffer within the community.

"Queering" fantasy and fairy tales should be of more importance in our times, even if some people might still resist it due to the normative rules set by society, and their fear of the

unknown. This fear elicits responses from us that are always ugly. We think surviving is the most important thing to do, while never questioning the unknown, and thus curiosity takes a back seat to the mere basic instinct of survival. We always draw lines between what is “good” and what is “evil” and this narrows our field of vision, not considering that maybe everything is not actually what it seems. We must seek to understand and ask questions instead of automatically drawing a sword against the unknown, and always reacting in violence.

In *Weep for Day* by Indrapramit Das the protagonist acknowledges that they “need to see the rest of this world, to meet its other inhabitants... with curiosity, not apprehension.” She also says that they “might die here. [But] it won’t be because we ventured into evil. It will be because we sought new knowledge. And in that, I have no regrets, even if I’m dead when this is read. A new age is coming. Let this humble account be a preface to it.”

And indeed, we must seek new knowledge, with curiosity, not with fear or anger of the unknown. This will not be easy of course; we still have a long way to go to reach acceptance. When the two main characters in *Small Changes Over Long Periods of Time* by K.M. Szpara, talk about the transformation of the transsexual protagonist into a vampire, they say:

*“Small changes over long periods of time, you said?”*

*“Yes,” Andreas says. “Why?”*

*“Just making sure.”*

This is exactly what happens in real life. We cannot expect the whole world to change overnight, but rather with “small changes over long periods of time.”

“Queering” fantasy is of high importance, because it serves to educate the masses, as have the fairy tales of old ingrained in our minds the heteronormative rules set by society. Orme (2010), says that Cristina Bacchilega, concludes her remarks about *Kissing the Witch* by highlighting how important it is to learn how to read fairy tales more openly regarding sexuality “maintaining a critical tension between the language of heteronormativity and the languages of transgressive and queer desires.”

Therefore, it is highly important as I have mentioned to learn how to read “queerly” no matter what society thinks about it, or how much resistance it might spark. The minds of humans are still young, like Indrapramit Das explains in his story, as the protagonist explains what she thought snow was:

*But to my young self, the constant crying of that bruised sky was just another mystery in the world, a sorcery perpetrated by the Nightmares.*

This in fact could be the limitation. That not everyone is prepared to read “queerly” as mentioned before by Orme (2010). Maybe writing the stories with explicit queer content as the stories I have mentioned above could probably prevent people from reading them differently in their own way. My novella being fantasy, but not explicitly talking about homosexual desires can be read in many different ways, because as we mentioned earlier, this genre resists unitary reading. But I do believe that more stories about queer marginalized groups are needed so that they can become

normalized. Almost all of the very famous fairy tales represent heteronormative love, and the depiction of the women as passive and in need of a man. We need more stories like those of George MacDonald and Oscar Wilde.

Jenkins (1998) argues that in even the most traditional narratives we can hint the occasional shift. She states that “some young adult fiction with gay/lesbian content appears to be changing the story, appropriating folklore motifs and traditional narrative conventions to create new narratives that directly challenge even the conventional heterosexual stories embodied in fairy tales.” Jenkins also describes a scene from *Weetzie Bat* by Francesca Lia Block, as the characters are sat around a “quintessentially familial dinner table.” “And she looked around the table at Dirk and Duck and My Secret Agent Lover Man and Cherokee and Witch Baby—all of them lit up and golden like a wreath of lights. I don’t know about happily ever after [Weetzie thought] ... but I do know about happily” [83, p. 88].

Not all stories have to end with happily ever after, it is indeed not very realistic. Just “happily” for the moment is enough, and that is what we should be teaching our children through fairy tales, and every reader through any genre, especially fantasy. Sacrifices must be made sometimes, and not everything always ends perfectly; I believe that this also must be a theme that is more developed in future literature. Along with the fact that we are all different, and in our difference lies our beauty.

## Bibliography

- Das, I. (2015, April). *Weep for Day*. [http://clarkesworldmagazine.com/das\\_04\\_15\\_reprint/](http://clarkesworldmagazine.com/das_04_15_reprint/).
- Downs, A. (2012). *The Velvet Rage: Overcoming the Pain of Growing Up Gay in a Straight Man’s World, Second Edition* (2nd ed.). Da Capo Lifelong Books.
- Duffy, J. (2001). Gay-Related Themes in the Fairy Tales of Oscar Wilde. *Victorian Literature and Culture*, 29(2), 327-349. Retrieved April 28, 2021, from <http://www.jstor.org/stable/25058557>
- El-Mohtar, A. (2017, February 27). *Seasons of Glass and Iron*. *Uncanny Magazine*. <http://uncannymagazine.com/article/seasons-glass-iron/>.
- Jenkins, C. (1998). From Queer to Gay and Back Again: Young Adult Novels with Gay/Lesbian/Queer Content, 1969-1997. *The Library Quarterly: Information, Community, Policy*, 68(3), 298-334. Retrieved May 2, 2021, from <http://www.jstor.org/stable/4309229>
- Jones, R. K. (2016, July 7). *The Night Bazaar for Women Becoming Reptiles by Rachael K. Jones*. *Beneath Ceaseless Skies*. <http://www.beneath-ceaseless-skies.com/stories/the-night-bazaar-for-women-becoming-reptiles/>.

- McGillis, R. (2003). "A Fairytale Is Just a Fairytale": George MacDonald and the Queering of Fairy. *Marvels & Tales*, 17(1), 86-99. Retrieved April 27, 2021, from <http://www.jstor.org/stable/41389901>
- Moussawi, G., & Vidal-Ortiz, S. (2020). A queer Sociology: On POWER, race, and Decentering Whiteness. *Sociological Forum*, 35(4), 1272-1289. doi:10.1111/socf.12647
- Orme, J. (2010). Mouth to Mouth: Queer Desires in Emma Donoghue's "Kissing the Witch". *Marvels & Tales*, 24(1), 116-130. Retrieved April 28, 2021, from <http://www.jstor.org/stable/41389030>
- Puechner, S. (2016). CHAPTER TWELVE: "But He Was Your Prince Charming!": Accounting for the End of "Ever After" with a Divorce Fairytale. *Counterpoints*, 477, 163-173. Retrieved April 28, 2021, from <http://www.jstor.org/stable/45157194>
- Rustad, A. M. (2021, March 30). *The Gentleman of Chaos*. Apex Magazine. <https://apex-magazine.com/the-gentleman-of-chaos/>.
- Seifert, L. (2015). Introduction: Queer(ing) Fairy Tales. *Marvels & Tales*, 29(1), 15-20. doi:10.13110/marvelstales.29.1.0015
- Szpara, K. M. (2017, April 22). *Small Changes Over Long Periods of Time*. Uncanny Magazine. <http://uncannymagazine.com/article/small-changes-long-periods-time/>.
- Turner, K. (2015). At Home in the Realm of Enchantment: The Queer Enticements of the Grimm' "Frau Holle". *Marvels & Tales*, 29(1), 42-63. doi:10.13110/marvelstales.29.1.0042