

# The Intersections Between Queer Trauma and Writing

## An Exploration of Queer Authors and Trauma’s Role in their Works

Salem Coyle

Palo Alto High School

### INTRODUCTION

Queerness and literary arts are deeply interconnected. As of 2023, roughly a quarter of those in writing-related work in the United States identify as LGBTQ+ (Lee & Low Books et al.) Simultaneously, queerness and trauma also have deep connections. Queer people, as a marginalized population undergoing unique stressors, are at a far higher risk of experiencing clinical symptoms of trauma, such as PTSD (Valentine et al.)

Due to the intersections between queerness, writing, and trauma, queer authors are often faced with the question of how they should breach the topic of trauma in regards to their works. On one hand, writing about one’s trauma has proven an effective outlet in some studies (Glass et al.) However, to some queer writers, writing about their trauma can feel reductive and repetitive (Sisley, Taylor). In an effort to shed more light on this specific demographic and analyze its output, this study analyzes how trauma impacts the writing of a number of queer authors, and finds common themes between their experiences.

### RESULTS

Overall, the experiences of queer authors towards the presence of autobiographical trauma writing in their works is mixed— though representing one’s queer trauma in one’s works can lead to a greater level of solidarity with other queer readers, and can lead to healing for the author themselves, there also manifests an increased pressure to write about one’s traumatic experiences if they are queer, and the experience of writing through one’s trauma can often be harrowing and strenuous for the authors behind these works.

### METHODOLOGIES

This paper utilizes a number of different resources. Statistics and polls from a number of sources are used for background information, as well as the studies conducted by other individuals on similar topics. Further, the personal accounts of multiple individuals are focused upon. The inquiry approach of the research is phenomenological. Databases, documents, media, measurements, and text are used. Due to the sensitive nature of this information, all data is collected from prior research done by others, such as interviews that have already been conducted, and polls that have already been conducted by reliable sources. Coding and summarizing are used to synthesize the information collected and to draw comparisons between the lived experiences of multiple people. Data is mostly qualitative, but some quantitative data is used to contextualize the main area of research (ex. percentages of queer people who have experienced trauma to explain why queer trauma is the focus of the study). Eleven sources are used. No live subjects were used in the production of this study.

### IMPLICATIONS

Though results are inconclusive, the varying perspectives of these three authors only strengthen the notion that this intersection requires further study. In a day and age when the idea of queerness is still largely tied to trauma, queer authors should have the freedom to write about their trauma to whatever capacity they desire and that is helpful for them— whether it be extensively, partially, or not at all



Photo by Vivian Le



Photo by Bríd O'Donovan



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### BRANDON TAYLOR

Taylor ties his viewpoint on his own trauma-based writing to both Blackness and queerness, and highlights the pressure he's felt towards writing more about his experiences as a Black queer man. He states that, though he felt more pressure to provide "representation" in the earlier stages of his writing career, that he feels no draw to what he calls "straight-up identitarian writing", and that many of the things he could say about aspects of his trauma have already been said by others in a better way. He states that there is often a pressure towards queer writers, especially Black queer writers, on writing about their trauma, but he does not feel the want to write about it himself, as he has already lived those experiences.

### SEÁN HEWITT

Hewitt encourages a heightened focus on queer joy in writing, as opposed to queer trauma. He believes that a focus on the traumatic aspects of queerness led to much of his internalized homophobia. However, he does believe that queer trauma and queer sadness can help unify the community, and places it in his own work as a result.

### TAMSYN MUIR

Muir places less of an emphasis on the impact of her trauma on her works and more of an emphasis on trauma's manifestation before and during the process of her writing. She mentions how her trauma in regards to coming out, along with the homophobia perpetuated in her family, made her hesitant to put out her queer writing for a long time. She then discusses how queer trauma impacts the characters within her work, calling attention to unhealthiness and toxicity in her queer character dynamics, and claiming that these complex dynamics serve to elevate the work (especially for queer readers).

### REFERENCES

