

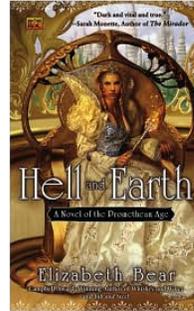
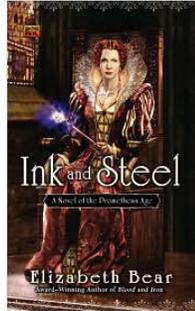
2009 Gaylactic Spectrum Awards
Best Novel

Winner

The Stratford Man (Ink and Steel/Hell and Earth)

by Elizabeth Bear

Roc ISBN: 0451462793 (Ink and Steel) / 0451463048 (Hell and Earth)



The worlds of Elizabethan England and Faerie mix in this tremendous story from Elizabeth Bear. In this version of the world, the words of a great writer can shape the world as a form of magic, and in the hands of Bear you'll find yourself believing that this magic of words is more than just a fantasy story. Politics and spies, magic and murder, and everywhere you look a character written with such depth that even someone seen for a single page seems real.

Bear does not hide from using the historical personages of the time, particularly those in politics and the theatre. Neither does she hide from the sexuality of those individuals. Of course Shakespeare plays a prominent role politically, magically and emotionally through the story.

And what a story it is, as both England and Faerie face crises that only a handful of individuals, including Shakespeare, can overcome. The future of both worlds is in the hands of the Bard and his friends who mix word and deed to forge a carefully balanced path between the needs of both worlds. Both Shakespeare and his rival and teacher Marlowe must face their own demons, their own mortality, and their own desires if they are to find immortality for their own work, and the two kingdoms they come to love.

In a career filled with fantastic books, many of which include significant LGBT content (more than once we've joked about the Gaylactic Spectrum Awards Elizabeth Bear Short List), these two novels which combine to form The Stratford Man represent a quantum leap forward and were far and away the work most deserving of our award for the year.

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Short List

***All the Windwracked Stars* by Elizabeth Bear**
Harper Perennial ISBN: 0-061-43036-6

A shamed survivor of Ragnarok, the waelcyrge Muire, and a mystically crafted/birthered creature named Kasimir face the end of the world...again...after their survival of the first arameddon. The cast includes many gay or bisexual characters including Muire, and a male prostitute named Cathoair who becomes embroiled in the efforts of the Grey Wolf to succeed in ending the world after his failure the first time around.

***Havemercy* by Jaida Jones & Danielle Bennett**
Tor Books ISBN: 0-765-35808-5

A delightful first novel mixing magical mechanical dragons, academics, a band of necessary misfit military daredevils, and politics. Add in a little yaoi/anime sensibility, and a hint of Gilbert and Sullivan and you might start to approach what you'll find in Havemercy. The novel includes both homoerotic undercurrents and significant open gay content.

***City of Ashes* by Cassandra Clare**
Ace Books ISBN: 0-441-01431-3

The second of Clare's Mortal Instruments young adult urban fantasy series, *City of Ashes* brings to more prominence the sexuality of Alec – one of the young Shadowhunters – who faces his attraction to his friend Jace and begins a relationship with a warlock. In addition, the exploration of Simon, a recently turned vampire, as he comes to terms with his new identity carries significant resonance for teens facing their own identity exploration as “other”.

***Shadows Return* by Lynn Flewelling**
Hyperion Books ISBN: 1-423-10195-2

Flewelling returns us to tales of the nightrunning lovers Alec and Seregil – now battling boredom and stagnation in their lives and relationship. When they become tangled in a plot involving slavers, strange alchemical magics, and a former lover of Seregil their bond and their lives are risked and they find themselves faced with the prospect of being parents...of a sort.

***Turnskin* by Nicole Kimberling**
Blind Eye Books ISBN: 0-451-46149-5

Turnskin provides a fascinating study of identity as we follow the story of Tom Fletcher, a young shapeshifter who travels to the city to find himself. Facing prejudice, unsure of himself, Tom finds himself living multiple lives as different people – and finds a way to use all of his identities to craft for himself a future as himself, Tom Fletcher, a voice for other shapeshifters who face the prejudices he's dealt with. Along the way Tom also finds love and romance with a man who appreciates him for exactly who and what he is. A sweet and charming novel about the power of identity and being yourself.