

# GAY CLASSICIST MANIFESTO

by Edmond Thornfield ([@ethornauthor](#))



As the 21<sup>st</sup> century begins, the current literary renaissance has shattered the shackles of heteronormative commandments that have constrained the classic canon. Yet forces of erasure still confine our existence to the shadows. To this day, governments around the world, social prejudice, and insidious institutions stifle our voices with censorship, cruelty, or death. Therefore, this is a call to battle—from one writer to others—to arm our pens and fight to reclaim our rightful place within the literary tradition. We must uncover long-forgotten tales of love and desire that rebelled against the strait bounds of convention. Modern literature has opened the way; we must now repopulate the last two millennia devoid of representation. Furthermore, we must reject the queer categorization which is intrinsically discriminatory. There are heterosexual, homosexual, bisexual, transexual, and asexual individuals. None are strange, for diversity in love and identity is integral to humanity. No single orientation may hold dominance over others.

From the sun-dappled groves of ancient Hellas to the adorned chambers of Renaissance Florence, to the lively streets of London, Paris, Rome, Africa, Asia, and the New World, human sexuality has blossomed in unapologetic diversity—a fundamental truth ruthlessly suppressed, leaving gaping holes in our cultural heritage.

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But no further shall we allow the past to remain empty. With pen in hand, keyboard under our fingers, and fire in our hearts, we shall undertake a literary crusade to restore marginalized voices to their deserved visibility.

Madeline Miller took up the banner in 2011 with *The Song of Achilles*; Marcel Proust preceded her by almost a century, with *In Search of Lost Time*; and most curiously, E.M. Forster's *Maurice*, completed in 1914, went unpublished until 1971. Does anyone wonder why?

And there's Virginia Woolf's *Orlando* (1928), Patricia Highsmith's *The Price of Salt* (1952), and Gore Vidal's *Myra Breckenridge* (1968). Patricia published her novel under the pseudonym Claire Morgan, for personal safety concerns due to its lesbian content.

I call to writers of my time to breathe life into the long-silenced narratives of Sappho, Oscar Wilde, Radclyffe Hall, and even Shakespeare. His sonnets to the "Fair Youth" have long been overlooked as love letters to a male lover. (Scholars know the truth, yet refuse to acknowledge it. 126 sonnets written to a "platonic interest"—who needs a reality check?)

We must tell the stories of all those whose love defied their age's constraints and cast them aside as footnotes obscured by the relentless march of heteronormative hegemony.

Naysayers, oppressive governments, or the promoters of cultural stagnation shall not deter us, for our cause springs from radical humanism, a clarion call to revise the boundaries of what is deemed classic and canonical. Our writing shall dispel the illusion of a monolithic, heterosexual literary tradition, revealing the vibrant tapestry of the gay, bisexual, and transexual experience woven into our civilization's legacy.

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Through works of historical fiction transporting readers into bygone eras, we shall reanimate long-suppressed identities and desires. Period-evocative prose shall grapple with timeless questions of love, identity, and the search for life's meaning, challenging our audience's conceptions, stirring their emotions, and opening their eyes to the rich plurality that has always been present yet was systematically erased.

In doing so, we shall not merely reclaim the classic canon but transform it with life-affirming gay energy—yes, it means happy!—embedding within its core the intricate threads of our stories, struggles, and triumphs. No longer shall the heterosexual narrative reign supreme. From the sun-dappled groves of ancient Hellas to the adorned chambers of Renaissance Florence, and onward to the 21<sup>st</sup> century, we shall celebrate the spectrum of human sexuality in its glorious, undaunted diversity.

And so I bid us march forth, our pens and notebooks poised to unleash a literary revolution to shake the established order's foundations. We are the gay classicists, revisionist historians. We shall write with boundless fervor and force the world to reckon with a long-hidden truth.

Let this manifesto thunder afar and summon those who would join our quest. Together, we shall reclaim the classic canon, one story at a time, until the voices of the marginalized and silenced are heard once more, echoing through the ages with their power and beauty.

