

Chapter 5: “Redefining the Archive in Queer Historical Romance Novels”

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Abstract: This chapter argues that recent queer historical romance novelists conceive of their relationship to long eighteenth-century history as both reparative and revolutionary, offering a counter-narrative to the assumption that queer historical love stories are inevitably tragic. Using Olivia Waite’s *The Ladies Guide to Celestial Mechanics* (2019) as a case study, this chapter examines how, even when queer historical romances are indebted to the marriage plot and follow some of its key beats, they resist the sense of narrowing possibility that is often associated with romantic closure. By drawing on archival resources and innovating within archival lacunae, queer historical romance writers like Waite are engaged with questions of historical accuracy while also challenging who dictates the terms of historical accuracy.