

ABSTRACTS

21 MAY - 23 MAY 2025
CONFERENCE

QUEER PASTS

**WHAT'S QUEER IN
QUEER HISTORY?**



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RUC Roskilde University



**DANMARKS FRIE
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Keynotes

Professor Anjali Arondekar (University of California, Santa Cruz),
21st of May, 14:15 – 15:30

Archives of Dissent: Sexuality.Caste.History

Suturing histories of caste and sexuality to archives of dissent in South Asia, this talk rearranges the grammar of our ethical engagements with the past and present. At stake here are the historical vernaculars that found the evidentiary regimes of rights and representation for minoritized subjects. What I offer here are intimations of andolan/dissent, meditations that move between the heady inspirations of protest and the stultifying violence of archival practices. Andolan is a movement in Hindustani music, an alankar (combination/ornamentation of notes) that oscillates between one fixed note and its counterpart, touching, suffusing, all that lies in between. Let us imagine such a history together.

Professor Matt Cook (University of Oxford), 23rd of May, 09:00 –
10:15

Entangled Tales: Making Queer History Since the 1960s

This lecture brings *Queer Beyond London* (2023), which Matt co-authored with Alison Oram, into conversation with his forthcoming *Writing Queer History* (2026). It stays close to the details of queer lives lived in four English cities since the 1960s and in the process gives an account of the collaborative, cross-cutting historical practice that has developed to account for them. He argues that these lives and these modes of history making are more than a muted echo of each other and that this is part of the power of queer history as we confront attempts by the authoritarian right to eviscerate our complex past.

Parallel sessions 1: 21st of May, Wednesday 16:00–18:00

Stream: More than a Thousand Words 1: Methodological Perspectives on Media Sources in Queer and Trans History

Noora Kallioniemi (University of Turku) Comedic Cross-Dressing in Finnish Popular Comedy

Cross-dressing has been a central element of comedic performance for centuries, with its roots in early theatrical traditions. In film, particularly in Finnish popular comedy during the 1950s studio era, cross-dressing continued as a significant comedic device, as seen in films like *Pekka ja Pätkä puistotäteinä* (*Pekka and Pätkä as Park Nannies*, 1955), where the main male characters dress as female nannies to get a job. As in this film, the reason for cross-dressing in popular comedy is usually practical: it occurs either due to disguise, a misunderstanding, or some other necessity. At the same time, this narrative device opens up opportunities to study the understanding of gender roles during the time the films were made.

This presentation suggests that comedic cross-dressing in Finnish popular comedy specifically defines the boundaries and roles of masculinity. Comedic cross-dressing is not merely a temporary role reversal but serves as a cultural tool that defines gender boundaries and reinforces traditional masculine norms and roles. For it to function, comedic cross-dressing requires a cultural assertion that the number of genders is limited and their roles are clearly defined. At the same time, it allows for ruptures within cultural gender norms, creating spaces for subversion and ambiguity.

This presentation aims to distinguish between comedic cross-dressing and depictions of transvestite and transgender characters, focusing on how the former specifically defines and reinforces the boundaries of a binary gender system in Finnish popular comedy. While the roles and identities of men are temporarily disrupted, they are ultimately reinforced and clearly defined. In the comedic context, cross-dressing does not offer permanent changes to gender roles but serves as a means to playfully mock and reaffirm established norms.

This study emphasizes the importance of distinguishing comedic cross-dressing in film from cinematic representations of trans, advocating for further exploration of how gender fluidity is used comedically to define gender and reinforce societal norms.

Mio Laine (University of Turku): Discussions of diversity of gender expression in Finnish newspapers (1868-1917)

In this presentation I will discuss mentions of diversity of gender expression that can be found in Finnish newspapers during the time period of 1868-1917. The presentation is based on my master's thesis in Cultural History, in which I analyze digitized newspaper articles from all over Finland that are in the collections of the Finnish National Library. In my thesis I mainly focus on what these articles can tell us about the way Finnish society at the time understood gender, the differences between men and women and the normative ways of being a man or a woman.

The presentation will discuss these aforementioned themes by exploring for example the tones of these articles when discussing diversity of gender expression, as well as the language used to discuss people whose gender expression was outside the norm. I am also interested in the attitudes and reactions towards these people, and if these reactions differ based on the context. This presentation will introduce some of these contexts, which I have identified in my research based on the contexts in relation to which diversity of gender expression was most often reported in newspapers. These include crime, jokes, the women's right movement and something I would call profiles, where individual people were thrust into the spotlight by the press solely because of their gender expression.

In my presentation I will also discuss what these articles can tell us about the press' role in both highlighting and distributing information about diversity of gender expression.

Jean Lukkarinen: (University of Turku) Gendersex diversity and activism in the Finnish media (1960-2000)

Gendersex (in Finnish *sukupuoli*) diversity has been discussed in the Finnish media since the 1960s. The concepts of gender and sex became topics for debate in the media following the rising awareness of equality, sexuality and queer identities. Media took interest in the gendersex-diverse people in Finland after the first publicly known gender-affirming surgery took place in the end of the 1950s. As it was difficult to change one's name legally or get the access to the surgery - and living as a gendersex-diverse person was not easy - the gendersex-diverse people started giving interviews to the media to make their lives easier. In these interviews, they formed, deformed and challenged the ideas of what the diversity of gender and sex meant in the Finnish society and Finnish queer activism.

In my presentation I will introduce my ongoing PhD research in Cultural History, in which I analyze how gendersex diversity has been portrayed in the Finnish newspapers, magazines and television & radio shows from the 1960s to the 2000s. In my thesis I analyze media interviews given by queer activists who identify themselves outside of the 'normative' gendersex binary system, or challenge it by expressing their gender/sex in culturally 'non-normative' ways. I have also interviewed activists about their motives for telling about their lives in the media. My focus is to find out, how telling about gendersex diverse lives has formed and reformed the concepts of different gendersex diverse identities in the Finnish context.

I argue that definitions of gender and sex have been in constant flux and subject to constant redefinition during the period covered by my thesis. My presentation also suggests that Finnish queer activists and queer organizations have tried to control and change the media narrative about gendersex diversity. I also suggest a plural narrative analysis as a method to analyze the different and even contradictory narratives told about gendersex diverse lives in the media.

Riikka Taavetti (University of Turku): Queer Community Media and Memories of Queer Cruises

This presentation addresses queer cruises on the Baltic sea that were organized in the early 1980s and early 2000s by Finnish queer activists and groups partly in cooperation with Swedish organizers. It discusses the analyses of queer community media sources advertising and covering the cruises, both in queer magazines and online media of the early 2000s. The presentation engages with the particularities of using queer community media in research and analyses what kind of opportunities these sources have for addressing queer cruises and where their limitations as sources lie - what kind of aspects of past queer activism these sources can reveal and what is not possible to reach with them.

In addition to discussion how queer community media sources may be used in this kind of study, the presentation addresses how the cruises are remembered. This perspective is based on written reminiscences that will be gathered in early 2025 with an open call for writings both in Finland and Sweden. The call is directed to everyone who has participated on the queer cruises and is interested in sharing their reflections. The results of this collection campaign are discussed together with the view provided by the analysis of community media sources.

The presentation is a part of a study that addresses both the Finnish and Swedish queer cruises as experienced and remembered. The study is linked to a larger research project on ferry travel, Cruising the Baltic Sea: Nation, Gender and Sexuality in pleasure-based ferry traffic between Finland, Åland and Sweden (PI Katarina Mattsson, funding from The Foundation for Baltic and East European Studies).

Stacey Copeland (University of Groningen): Queer Ears in Dutch media

Radio programs have long served as crucial platforms for LGBTQ+ communities, offering spaces for community building, experimentation, and activism. Amidst our current climate of misinformation and with LGBTQ+ rights increasingly at risk around the globe, as an audio producer and researcher, I turn to radio archives and consider what we can learn by listening back. How might we envision renewed queer futures for society and industry today through the successes and challenges of Dutch broadcasting amidst the 1980s AIDS crisis? What priorities or practices have we lost in our rapid shift toward a digital society? In the Netherlands, programs such as *MVS Radio* and *Het Roze Rijk* played pivotal roles from the early 1980s, addressing concerns and questions of the LGBTQ+ community. Later discontinued by NPS in 2003, *Het Roze Rijk* (formerly *Homonos*), alongside the illegal turned public broadcast *MVS Radio* provides a unique historical ground to examine the intersection of queer sound culture, activism, and media governance during these decades.

This paper responds to the conference call question, "What new historiographical methods and approaches are needed to uncover and accurately represent queer histories?" I apply critical listening methods to Dutch LGBTQ+ radio archives as a route into slowing down and deconstructing how we engage with queer history. By focusing on the auditory dimensions of queer history, this research seeks to 'queer' the predominantly visual approaches in queer cultural studies. In *Living a Feminist Life* (2017) and again in *Complaint!* (2021), Sara Ahmed invokes the figure of the 'feminist ear' as a practical orientation toward collectively hearing what is not being heard. What does it mean to orient ourselves queerly toward the sounds of the past? As cultural sound scholars have argued, critical listening provides a route to renewed sonic possible worlds that can counter "dominant aural tastes and standards" of white elite heteromascularity (Stoever, 2016, p.13; see also Robinson, 2020; Voegelin, 2021). The Dutch case of *Het Roze Rijk* and *MVS Radio* offers a distinctive context for examining queer sonic politics, shaped by shifts in national media policy, arts funding, and the Netherlands' role in global LGBTQ+ rights advocacy. Despite its reputation as a pioneer in LGBTQ+ rights, the Netherlands' rich history of LGBTQ+ radio remains underexplored, overshadowed by Anglo-American narratives in queer heritage studies.

This study situates Dutch LGBTQ+ radio within the broader historical framework of media activism during the AIDS crisis, a time of significant sociopolitical change. Through a queer listening ear, this paper explores how these programs functioned as sites of community building, experimentation, and information activism. Furthermore, it considers how the lessons from these histories might inform more equitable media landscapes in today's digitized world. By foregrounding the interplay between sound media, activism, and queer cultural heritage, this paper introduces critical insights into the historical and global significance of Dutch LGBTQ+ radio activism.

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Stream: Literature and the Arts 1: Queer history in queer literature

Casey-May Reeves (University of Birmingham): Literary lesbian 'Michael Field': Sapphic poetry at the fin-de-siecle

This paper is a study of three Sapphic poetry extracts by British, Victorian author Michael Field from the emerging field of Queer and Trans Nineteenth-Century Studies. Sappho was an ancient Greek poetess renowned for her homoerotic lyric verses (Reynolds, 2001, pg. 22). Prins argues Sappho is 'imagined in the present...projected onto the past', likely facilitating her longevity (1999, pg. 3). Wittig and Zeig (1979, pg. 136) capture this in their definition of Sappho by leaving an empty page. It has been suggested that Sappho is a *tabula rasa* which has been re-written by each new generation, a reflection of their own desires and aesthetics. Evaluating Sapphic representation at the fin-de-siecle has significant implications for our current understandings of sexuality and gender. Judith Butler describes the recent 'moral panic' in which right-wing movements have weaponised gender and sexuality non-conformity as a 'scapegoat,' directly impacting human rights legislation in the process (2024). By emphasizing fin-de-siecle Sapphism, this paper offers an

ideological counterpoint to narratives implying queerness and transness are exclusively post-modern inventions (Mussman, 2023). Building on Butler's (1999) early understandings of gender and sexuality as culturally contingent, the fin-de-siecle Sapphic emerges not as revisionist efforts of contemporary identity politics, but as a snapshot of an already-ancient queer history. In this paper, I argue that Michael Field, and other proto-queer authors at the fin-de-siecle, referenced Sappho to covertly signal with other members of the queer community. This enabled them to maintain Sappho's classical associations to uphold status and acceptance, whilst simultaneously highlighting the famous 'Lesbian poet' as a form of proto-queer activism and self-liberation. Until recently, analysis of Sapphic representation at the fin-de-siecle has been minimal, likely due to hetero-sexism dominant within the academy. By addressing 'taboo' representation such as with Michael Field's 'incestuous' real-life relationships between an aunt and her niece, this paper is querying contemporary and historical binary understandings of gender and non-normative sexual relationships.

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Anton Juul (Uni of Copenhagen): "It is the wounds that sing": On the queer historicity of trauma

In this paper, I propose some theoretical reflections on how we can take trauma seriously, not only as an individual experience but also, and more precisely, as a historical experience, that is, an experience that opens the individual subject to and implicates it in history, as Cathy Caruth argues (1996). This is one of the most central questions, I argue, in Niels Henning Henning Falk Jensby's contemporary novel *Techno* (2016), which is highly concerned with the question of homosexuality's 'queer past', and in which homosexuality and the trauma of sexual violence are intimately related. The novel raises a very important question as to how to narrate and engage with the history of homosexuality, with its past, when this history turns out to be a history of sexual trauma, and offers some interesting reflections on how to engage with a past that one is traumatically bound to. Following Caruth, trauma troubles any straightforward causality between a traumatic event and its effect; between a past and its present effects. As Valery Rohy argues (2014), trauma, rather, situates a *gap* of contingency where past and present should otherwise be connected as seamless and necessary succession. Thus, being the organizing principle of the novel's narrative but also the narrator's affective relationship to the past, trauma also troubles any straightforward causality between the narrator's sexual trauma and his homosexual orientation. Through its narrative rhythm and the traumatic 'off-beat', the novel addresses and works through this 'homosexual trauma' of sexual violence. This working-through is also recorded in the narrator's erotic investment in sadomasochistic subjection and power play. Following Elizabeth Freeman (2010), sadomasochism can be conceptualized as a queer erotohistoriographic exercise of addressing a traumatic past, whose violence remains yet to be understood. In the sadomasochistic ritual, the homosexual body "turns the beat around" (Freeman 2010), makes itself the subject of a past violent objectification, and turns suffering pleasurable. Sadomasochism thus becomes a way of *reproducing* a past that can only tell itself as a traumatic story of an 'impossible' survival that can nevertheless be enjoyed.

The paper is based on a research article from my on-going PhD dissertation work. The article is currently undergoing review.

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Magdalena Stoch (University of the National Education Commission, Krakow): Representations of queer identity in the novels of Marieke Lucas Rijneveld and Kim de l'Horizon

Representations of queer identity in contemporary literature constitute a complex and multifaceted field of study, intertwining issues of identity, belonging, trauma and systemic violence. This paper examines two works by Marieke Lucas Rijneveld: “The Discomfort of Evening” (2018) and “My Heavenly Favourite” (2020), alongside Kim de l'Horizon's novel “Blutbuch” (2022). The starting point is an exploration of the representation of queer identities within generational, rural and familial contexts.

The paper addresses the interplay of rurality and normativity in the works of Rijneveld and de l'Horizon, offering reflections on localised variations of normativity. Through an analysis of the narrative strategies present in these novels, the study demonstrates how contemporary literature poses questions about the possibilities of expressing queer identities in historical and generational contexts. It highlights how the integration of a queer perspective with the analysis of trauma opens up new avenues of research, compelling readers to redefine the boundaries between personal storytelling and collective narratives.

Rijneveld's literature shows how the use of animal metaphors enables critical insight into systemic mechanisms of violence. In her novels, the boundaries between species are blurred, allowing the author to draw analogies between the dehumanisation of humans and the treatment of animals. Victims of the patriarchal system - children, women, animals and outsiders - are portrayed as subjects deprived of autonomy, subordinated to the discourse of domination and control. Rijneveld situates violence as an element deeply rooted in culture and language, challenging the distinctions between 'breeding' and nurturing, between hunting and trapping. By queering identity and space-time, Rijneveld emphasises that violence against humans and animals has a common basis: dehumanisation based on the denial of freedom and agency.

Kim de l'Horizon's “Blutbuch” explores transgenerational trauma and queer autofiction. The titular “tree of blood” intertwines themes of genealogy, violence and the search for identity. The author examines familial relationships, revealing their entanglement with structural violence and oppressive patriarchal patterns. As the narrator grapples with the legacy of violence, she also strives to create a new language that rejects binary constructs and hierarchical affiliations. In “Blutbuch”, the queering of identity becomes a process of transforming oppressive genealogical narratives into a space of emancipation and dialogue with the past.

Research questions:

- How do the novels of Marieke Lucas Rijneveld and Kim de l'Horizon construct representations of queer identity within generational, rural and familial contexts?
- How do the narrative strategies in these works challenge the boundaries between personal and collective narratives, particularly in relation to trauma and normativity?
- How does the use of metaphor, particularly animal imagery, in Rijneveld's literature and the genealogical symbolism in Blood Book contribute to a broader critique of systemic violence and the dehumanisation of marginalised groups?

Karolina Lewinska (University of Wroclaw): What if the History of Polish Sapphic Literature Is Already Queer?

Central and Eastern European countries, including Poland, have developed unique relationships with "queerness," shaped by the sociopolitical isolation of the Iron Curtain. Unlike the West, where milestones such as Stonewall and AIDS activism played pivotal roles in queer history, Poland's lesbian and gay activism emerged under significantly different conditions. This divergence has often led to perceptions of "backwardness" in post-communist queer histories, with some scholars suggesting that Central and Eastern Europe must replicate the Western trajectory. However, this paper argues that Polish sapphic literature does not need to imitate Western models of progression. Instead, it can be seen as inherently queer in its own right, with a fluid and subversive tradition that resists essentialist categorizations.

Purpose:

This paper challenges the idea that Polish queer history follows a "linear", Western-style evolution from essentialist representations of lesbian identity to fluid and deconstructive queer politics. It proposes that Polish sapphic literature, even in its earlier forms, already demonstrates a queer sensibility by being non-linear, fragmented, and resistant to stabilization.

Methods:

The study examines the historiography of Polish sapphic literature, including the persistent notion that non-heteronormative women were largely invisible until the 1990s. Through a review of current scholarship, it critiques the assumption that a visible lesbian literary tradition had to precede the emergence of queer theories in Poland.

Results:

Recent discoveries, such as *Anetka* (1931) by Maria Modrakowska and *Lesbian Love* (1925) by Eva Kotchever, complicate linear narratives about Polish "lesbian" literature. These works suggest that early 20th-century Polish writers explored themes of love and eroticism between women in ways that are arguably more provocative than later works from the 1990s. Furthermore, the absence of a fixed "first" lesbian text or a coherent literary tradition underscores the fluidity and instability that characterize Polish sapphic literature.

Conclusion:

Polish literary scholarship has not yet established rigid definitions of "lesbian literature" or "lesbian writing," nor has it constructed an essentialist vision of lesbian identity to be later deconstructed by queer impulses. This absence reflects the inherently queer nature of Polish sapphic literary history: fluid, ever-shifting, and resistant to stabilization.

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Naoise Murphy (University of Oxford): Complicit histories: queer spaces in Mary Renault's *The Friendly Young Ladies*

The dominant spatial story of queer life in the twentieth century hinges on the departure from the rural, the domestic, and the ordinary, towards metropolitan and subcultural spaces. Mid-century English middlebrow fiction, however, is replete with depictions of lesbian and transmasculine characters peaceably at home in rural, village and small-town spaces, testifying to the comfortable existence of a form of respectable gendered and sexual dissidence within the carefully delimited parameters of the white nation. Novels by writers like Angela Thirkell, Agatha Christie, Nancy Spain, Pamela Frankau, E.F. Benson, Josephine Tey and Mary Renault demonstrate how middlebrow literature – a loose and contested category ranging across a spectrum of popular fictional forms – functioned as a key space of queer potential in the English cultural imagination at mid-century.

This paper extends Ben Nichols' theorisation of the 'lesbian middlebrow' to offer an analysis of queer complicity in the normative spatial structures of twentieth-century England. Inspired by Matt Cook and Alison Oram's *Queer Beyond London*, and other work in queer geographies and place-based literary history, it focuses on space, place, sexuality, and gender in Mary Renault's *The Friendly Young Ladies* (1944). Moving between Cornwall and London, but set primarily in a semi-rural riverside idyll, this middlebrow novel centres on lesbian couple Leo and Helen, who live together on a houseboat on the Thames. Working through issues of (dis)comfort and home, and the transmasculine resonances in Leo's characterisation, this analysis contends that close attention to space and place is the key to understanding how these queer characters find a place within the white English nation.

Upholding rather than challenging the structures of a cisheteronormative, postimperial society, these figures challenge heroic fantasies of queer history and disrupt linear narratives of progress from repression to liberation. Rather than cleaving to simplistic narratives of queer resistance, bringing the lesbian and transmasculine middlebrow into the scope of 'queer' asks us to come to terms with queer complicity in classist, racist and colonialist systems, and understand how these are inscribed into the places, spaces and landscapes of twentieth-century England. It is only by understanding this history that we can hope to dismantle these oppressive structures in the present and contend with the fractures in contemporary queer communities.

Stream: Uncovering 1: Silent, absent, secret

Karoliina Sjö (University of Turku): "12.7. Selim Comes to Me" – Examining Past Lives from a Queer Perspective

This paper, previously published in *SQS – Suomen Queer-tutkimuksen Seuran lehti* (2024), explores the examination of past lives through a queer lens, focusing on the diaries and letters of Nils Oskar Jansson (1862–1927), a schoolteacher from Kimitoön, Finland, and Selim Söderström (1874–1894), Jansson's

former student. Utilizing the methodological framework of life writing studies, the paper analyzes how queer lives, which challenge societal norms, are narrated and represented in historical documents. The archival materials of Jansson and Söderström, preserved at the Sagalund Museum in Kimitoön, an island in the Archipelago Sea in Southwest Finland, provide a unique case study for understanding the visibility and invisibility of queer identities in historical contexts.

The study delves into the ethical considerations of interpreting and presenting fragmented historical records, particularly those that hint at potential homosexual relationships. By examining Jansson's and Söderström's personal writings, the paper highlights the complexities of reconstructing queer histories and the importance of ethical storytelling.

This research contributes to the broader discourse on queer history by questioning how modern categories of gender and sexuality can be applied to historical figures. It emphasizes the need for ethical thinking about using past lives as source materials in the present day. The temptation to read historical documents through the lens of contemporary gender and sexuality concepts can obscure the meanings previously associated with sexuality (e.g., Leskelä-Kärki 2006; Horak 2016; Männistö-Funk 2019). This risk of anachronism is crucial to consider in any historical research, including life writing and queer history (e.g., Taavetti 2018). Historians are guided by an ethical-moral obligation to honor and do justice to people of the past (e.g., Kalela 2000; Leskelä-Kärki 2006, Sjö 2023). Especially in biographical research, discussions about ethics and the researcher's position have been lively since the 1990s.

It is clear that historians are part of their time, and our view of the past is largely guided by current questions. A historian's skill involves looking at sources in their historical context, and the better we know the era's discourse and concepts, the more sensitively we can read for example between the lines and make arguments. Discussions about knowledge production processes, ethics, anachronism, studying others' lives, and queer history are currently vibrant, and this paper aims to take part in these discussions.

Keywords: life writing, queer, ethics, diaries, letters, museums, Sagalund, Nils Oskar Jansson, Selim Söderström

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Linus Sollin (Malmö City Archives): Female- and male impersonators and the formation of queer communities of Malmö 1880-1910

During the second half of the 19th century, new types of artists within the cross-dressing tradition entered the stages of the European-American cultural sphere: female and male impersonators. The essence of these impersonators' performances, in contrast to earlier examples of cross-dressing on stage, lay in the audience's recognition and approach to the fact that the characters portrayed were of a different sex than the performers themselves. These performances had the potential to challenge prevailing norms concerning sex, gender, and sexuality, while also, for an initiated audience, offering homoerotic allusions.

The heyday of female and male impersonators coincided with a period when the concept of homosexuality gained traction as an explanatory framework for same-sex love and nonbinary identities—two aspects of human life that were more intertwined in the theoretical models of the time than they are today. Female and male impersonators have been suggested to have contributed to shaping public perceptions of homosexuals, an image that gained prominence in the mass media, among authorities, and within the general public. Additionally, these artists are believed to have inspired emerging homosexual identities. Identities that were developed within queer communities, which were forming in the growing cities of this era.

Linus Sollin, an archivist at Malmö City Archives, has researched the connections between female and male impersonators who performed in Malmö between 1880 and 1910 and the development of queer communities in the city. His research has identified 24 different artists and over 500 performances documented in local newspaper advertisements. Key questions explored in Sollin's work include: Which impersonators' performances challenged norms regarding sex, gender, and sexuality? In what contexts did the impersonators perform, and who were their audiences? Which artists can we identify as queer?

In addition to newspapers Sollin's research draws on extensive archival materials from five different countries including church archives, migrant archives, and police and court documents. These sources, often revealing information between the lines, provide insights into the sexuality and, although to a much lesser extent, gender identities of the individual artists, helping to portray the lives of those who lived queer experiences and participated in queer communities. The research aims to create a framework for understanding the role of female and male impersonators in the emergence of queer communities in Malmö. This framework also demonstrates how fragmentary historical sources, despite their limitations, can collectively contribute to a broader historical narrative.

This narrative has, over the past year, served as the foundation for archival-based history workshops for university and high school students. Currently, an article based on Sollin's work is undergoing peer review for publication in the journal *Lambda Nordica*.

Rebecca Jennings (University College London): 'Male is always attracted to female': Diana Chapman's narratives of lesbian selfhood in mid-twentieth-century Britain

This paper will take the personal testimonies of Diana Chapman (1928-2015) as a case study for opening up questions about the entangled nature of gender and sexual identities in mid-twentieth-century Britain. As a founding member of Minorities Research Group, which published Britain's first lesbian magazine in the 1960s, Diana Chapman narrated her story to several lesbian oral history collections in addition to submitting personal reflections as a lesbian to mainstream print publications. While Chapman explicitly claimed a lesbian identity, her accounts contain several themes which echo common tropes in trans narratives of the period, pointing to the possibility of a more complex understanding of her gender and sexual identity.

Drawing on queer and trans methodologies, I will tease out some of these moments of discomposure, and pay attention to the subtle differences between the versions of her story. While I do not seek to challenge Diana Chapman's own categorisation of her identity, I will suggest that her testimonies have broader implications, providing evidence of the tensions in categories of gender and sexuality in the mid-century and specifically the ongoing entanglement of the categories 'lesbian' and 'transsexual'. Chapman's attempts to curate her gendered and sexual subjectivity indicate that, far from being a historical moment characterised by clear, binary gender and sexual norms, as popular narratives have portrayed the 1940s to 1960s, post-war British society and culture was in fact grappling with shifting and uncertain modes of understanding gendered and sexual selfhood. Her collection of personal testimonies, narrated across a period of twenty years or more, offer a rare opportunity to chart shifting cultural notions of gender and sexuality and the process by which individuals rethink and reshape their subjectivity in response to the cultural scripts they encounter.

Robert Stilling (Florida State University): An archive deferred: Alexander Gumby's Queer Scrapbooks.

Alexander Gumby was a queer dandy, antiquarian book collector, and modernist scrapbook maker who ran a prominent salon and book studio during the Harlem Renaissance in the 1920s. In 1955, he arranged to have his scrapbook collection, which includes more than 200 handcrafted scrapbooks encompassing an encyclopedic array of African American historical materials, to Columbia University, offering his collection, known as his "Negroana Collection," as the "unwritten history" of Black experience in America. However, Gumby withheld four scrapbooks containing an extraordinary collection of queer materials, including decades of clippings concerned with homosexual criminality, early experiments in sex-reassignment interventions, licit and illicit homoerotic photography, and explicitly homosexual sonnets and doggerel, among an array of queer content, all of which Gumby withheld strategically in order to preserve for posterity his more readily public African American historical materials. These private queer scrapbooks, which were not sold to Columbia until four decades after Gumby's death, represent an archive deferred, attesting to queer communal reading and archival practices that are preserved outside institutional archives. This paper will highlight Gumby's queer collecting practices, which, informed by the dandyism of figures such as Oscar Wilde, present an alternative history of queer Black life in the early- to mid-twentieth-century United States. This paper will further argue how public-facing archival memory, particular the institutionalization of African American history, is constructed in tandem with private processes of deferral, erasure and exclusion of queer archival memory, demonstrating how decades-long processes of private transmission and coterie circulation can allow for long-delayed queer acts of archival meaning-making to at last take place.

Thorsteinn Vilhjamsson (University of Iceland): "These papers should be. Burned": Queering the history of a 19th century suicide and its archive

On 30 July 1884, Gísli Guðmundsson, a 25-year-old Icelandic student at the University of Copenhagen, committed suicide by jumping into the sea from a ferry. He left his jacket behind, hanging off the ferry's railing, in the pockets of which was a series of suicide letters and an extraordinary suicide diary, detailing his mental condition in the last days of his life. The diary, one of the letters and a variety of other documents from Gísli's hand have been preserved in Icelandic archives.

Gísli also features prominently in another diary which an important source for Icelandic 19th century queer history: the diary of his friend and fellow Copenhagen student, Ólafur Davíðsson. In the diary, Ólafur writes about a love triangle between the himself, Gísli, and a 15-year-old boy who was, Ólafur writes, their girlfriend.

This text may tempt scholars to read Gísli's suicide after the manner of a well-known trope: a queer person of the past committing suicide because of the ill fit between his identity and desires and the oppressive world around him. However, the paper will argue that this way of conceptualizing Gísli's suicide is unsatisfactory. In his own papers in the archive, no trace of the aforementioned love triangle is to be found, nor any other love relationship with a same-sex individual. Gísli cannot be put into a "queer" category simply because of how he is represented in someone else's diary writing.

Yet this paper will argue that there is another method of viewing his life and death in a queer fashion: through a queer analysis of Gísli's manipulation of time, place and identity in his suicide writings and in his careful creation of a queer archive about his life and untimely death. Contrasting this queer methodology of understanding Gísli's suicide with the previous identitarian assumptions of his queerness may reveal the power of queer historical analysis to reveal new insights into subjects in the past who chose to turn their life and death into troubling questions for the future.

Solo: Queer Genealogies and the Then and Now: Centering the Queer Historical Subject

Tamara Chaplin, (University of Illinois at Urbana-Champaign): *Sapphic Genealogical Geographies: A Case Study from Paris, 1933-1970*

My talk introduces a concept that I call "sapphic genealogical geographies" to analyze the complicated networks that governed the transfer of knowledge, support, territory, and power between women who loved women in twentieth century France. Taking one French lesbian cabaret, La Vie Parisienne, as a case study (established in Paris in 1933 and run successively by Suzy Solidor [1933-1946], Colette Mars [1946-1959], and Frede [1959-1970]), I demonstrate how the queer women who operated, performed in, and visited this venue helped constitute lesbian subcultures, kinship systems, and historical narratives that endured across generations. In so doing I aim to show not only how lesbian networks contributed to reconfiguring the topography of the city of Paris, but also to illustrate how marginalized groups have used historical precedent to legitimize their existence and contest the heteronormative frameworks that shape the public sphere more broadly.

Mapping the historical origins and development of the sapphic cabaret and tracing the networks it nourished challenges scholarship in the history of sexuality, urban history, and historical geography that effaces lesbian visibility and relegates lesbians to spaces that are primarily private, temporary, or noncommercial, particularly within urban environments. It also intersects with the topic of our panel today, the question of queer historicity. My work asks: how has generational knowledge, wealth, and culture been transmitted between women in the absence of the patriarchal family? On what material, economic and epistemological logics is queer kinship based? Did women, as women, face unique challenges or benefit from specific advantages in establishing "found" families, and if so, what were they? How did earlier generations of women who loved women use historical precedent to ensure that sapphic spaces, once occupied, would remain in the hands of other women like themselves?

My hypothesis is that the history of the sapphic cabaret in modern France can show us how women who loved women resorted to—and created—queer histories in order to exert what Henri Lefebvre might term their "right to the city" in ways that made possible new forms of collective life across time and space (Lefebvre, *Le droit à la ville*, 1968).

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Giselle Bernard, (European University Institute): *Veiling, Revealing – Looking for Queer Oriental Pasts in early 20th Century European Women's Writings*

Recounting a visit of her friend, French writer Lucie Delarue-Mardrus, to an archaeological museum built by the Missionaries of Africa in Carthage, fellow author Myriam Harry writes that she “surprised the Fathers by her archaeological knowledge and, especially, by her historical prescience. [...] Bent over the sarcophagus, she interrogated the skull and dispersed vertebrae mixed with talismanic jewels at the bottom of the stone vessel, breathed in with dark relish the emanations of the burial aromatics.” (1946: 12) Among Orientalists in early 20th century Europe, women desiring women like Delarue-Mardrus, were particularly eager to excavate ‘Oriental’ histories, and to find their own roots and genealogies in them.

This paper will explore the relations between orientalised pasts and early 20th century queer women through the lives and works of three travellers: Lucie Delarue-Mardrus (1874-1945), who travelled extensively to North Africa and the Middle East, British composer, writer and suffragette Ethel Smyth (1858-1944), who stayed in Egypt over the winter of 1913-1914, and German author, journalist and businesswoman Aimée Duc (1869-date of death unknown), who lived in India from 1903 to 1926.

A first part will discuss how these sources emerged as part of a broader turn to the ‘Orient’ and its mythical past in early 20th century sapphic subcultures, to remedy queer life in the present, which often came with experiences of isolation and unbelonging. Key to these experiences was the absence of any clear, well documented past or genealogy for queer subjects, prompting them to turn to orientalised geographies, often portrayed as more promising grounds than Europe for hopeful, emancipated futures.

The actors’ own practices of history making, in turn, invite academic historians like myself to take seriously the role of fantasy and imagination in recounting a queer past whose traces are often fragmented, euphemised or fictional. Like queer actors in the early 20th century, I find myself looking back less for ‘solid facts’ than for the stories weaved through their fragments, or as Sara

Ahmed put it, “as a refusal to inherit, a refusal that is a condition for the arrival of queer. To inherit the past in this world, for queers would be to inherit one’s own disappearance [...]. The task is to trace the lines for a different genealogy, one that would embrace the failure to inherit the family line as the condition of possibility for another way of dwelling in the world” (Ahmed 2006: 178).

Sifting through the fictional, documentary - or more often impossible to determine - writings of Delarue-Mardrus, Smyth and Duc, another difficulty emerges, namely the way that they overwrite another past yet: that of orientalised subjects and regions themselves. The final part of this paper will ask to what extent the writings, as a contact zone between queer and imperial histories, can challenge ethnocentric temporalities - notions of progress or backwardness - at the heart of Orientalism, and what we can learn of the past of orientalised subjects through queer fabulated histories.

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Ezgi Sarıtaş, (Ankara University): *Queer Temporalities, Homoerotic Imagination and Violence in Istanbul Ansiklopedisi*

In this paper, I examine how the Ottoman past has become both a source of nostalgic longing for a queer historical imagination as well as a frame of reference for modern, cross generational homoerotic desires in the mid-twentieth century. My focus is on one particular text: the *Istanbul Ansiklopedisi* (*IA* or *Encyclopaedia of Istanbul*), an unfinished eleven-volume magnum opus by the popular historian Reşad Ekrem Koçu, published between 1944 and 1973. This enigmatic work continues to intrigue and inspire queer historians, artists, writers, activists and scholars from various disciplines (Ayvaz 2022, Boone 2017, Kuru 2022, Pamuk 2017, Sarıtaş 2021; 2023).

As an admirer of Istanbul's urban subcultures, Koçu infused *IA* with a nostalgia for the vanishing homoerotic male subcultures of the city. Despite its designation as an "encyclopaedia", the idiosyncratic content of *IA* defies expectations, standing out as a personal text that borders on a first-person narrative (Ayvaz 2007; Sarıtaş 2020). At a time when expressions of male homoerotic desire were increasingly frowned upon, the seemingly impersonal and detached genre of the encyclopaedia offered Koçu with a unique space to publish Ottoman texts with homoerotic content alongside his own stories of beautiful, impoverished boys he encountered on the streets of Istanbul.

The encyclopaedia's non-linear narrative format allowed for an interplay of temporalities, placing a 18th-century literary figure alongside a 20th-century paperboy. This disruption of heteronormative notions of time and lineage makes *IA* a powerful text for queering Ottoman history as well as the heteronormative discourses of Koçu's own era. Through *IA* Koçu tries to save past figures of queer history, an effort doomed to fail according to Heather Love, "in part because this rescue is an emotional rescue, and in that sense, we are sure to botch it." (2007, 51) The recent digitization of the *IA* archive, which lifted the veil of secrecy that has been surrounding it for decades, has revealed how Koçu interwove pieces of fact and fiction to craft an "archive of feelings" in this rescue mission (Cvetkovich 2003).

However, the *IA* is also haunted by the various forms of -cross-temporal- violence and exploitation that may have permeated the lives of the young boys Koçu so vividly portrays. Koçu himself at times seems to condemn the violence against and exploitation of adolescent boys by adult men in the Ottoman texts, yet his relationships with the boys he encountered on the streets often perpetuate and underscore the class and educational hierarchies that underlie such violence.

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Riccardo Bulgarelli, (European University Institute): *Practices of hegemonic pasts: exploring past directions within the Italian homosexual movement FUORI! (1970s-2020s)*

The relationship of historical actors with the past, be it recovered, recognized or rejected, is subject to power relations. The ‘directions’ (Ahmed 2006) informing how historical actors discuss, understand, negotiate different “pasts” are the result of contextual relationships that determine forms of visibility, legitimacy, and marginality.

Since the mid-1970s, a progressive shift towards the past has taken place in the Italian homosexual movement FUORI (1971-1982). Accentuating alternate pasts became a promising political tool. This shift in temporal emphasis was accompanied by changes in objectives and practices. FUORI!, composed by groups spread across various Italian cities, was formed at the beginning of the 1970s. It promoted an oppositional and revolutionary agenda oriented toward future change. Faced with problems in terms of participation and political engagement, FUORI! leadership federated with Partito Radicale in 1974 adopting its civil rights agenda and participating in its institutional political actions. This turning point was accompanied by a progressive attention toward the past that took a variety of shapes in which specific political or homosexual histories were mobilized. In addition to memorializing the actions of the movement, activists began to combine their political actions with references to 1968, to homosexual persecution during Nazism, and to examples of homosexual lives in Italian history.

By observing these different examples of historical re-appropriation, the hypothesis of my paper is that the usage of different pasts within the networks of FUORI! not only reveals how political actions are informed by different forms of temporality, but also how genealogies, historical awareness, and memories can be

powerful tools for strengthening political networks. By adopting a queer (Bengry 2021; Evans 2016) and microhistorical approach (De Vito 2019) and demonstrating how connections form and develop according to intersectional factors, this paper draws on personal narratives (letters, autobiographies, oral interviews) to highlight how different pasts were mobilized to fashion (Summerfield 2019; Summerskill, Murphy, and Vickers 2022) specific homosexual individual and collective subjectivities (Passerini 1991) in this Italian collective actor.

By questioning how FUORI! combined different spatialities and temporalities to the past (Tremblay 2023), I explore how FUORI! was a political network informed by male and urban hegemonic practices (Connell and Messerschmidt 2005).

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Amanda Roswall: What are the French Seventies to Us? How Contemporary Queer Criticism and French Memoir Imagines the Sexual Revolution for the Future

The French seventies are not, it seems, a part of queer history. With Judith Butler's early work (1990; 1993) as the most canonical example, queer theory has pushed back on feminist thinking of the French 1970s, deeming the writing of thinkers like Luce Irigaray and Hélène Cixous essentialist. For a contemporary Black feminist like Françoise Vergès, moreover, the European feminists of that time exploited the figure of the enslaved person to describe their own status in heterosexual relationships (Vergès 2021, 16–17). Indeed, the French seventies have a bad reputation in contemporary queer studies and Black feminism, representing elements of feminist thinking that we have left behind.

Yet, in the work of an influential queer critic like Lauren Berlant, the French seventies play an important role as a trope for political imagination throughout their career (1994; 1995; 2022). In the last work of this thinker of "glitchy" (or queer) affects for the US present, *On the Inconvenience of Other People* (2022), the French seventies is present in the shape of the movie *Last Tango in Paris* (1972). Here, Berlant reads *Tango* for its representation of awkward heterosex set in the time and space of radical intimacy and politics: Paris in the 1970s.

Having no embodied memory of Paris or France in the 1970s, Berlant imagines the French seventies and its air of revolutionary sex across the distance of the Atlantic. Likewise, in the writing of Annie Ernaux, the seventies are recalled from a distance, even though, writing from and about post-war France, Ernaux is definitely closer to the events taking place in Paris in the late 1960s and early 1970s. With this tension on geographical and temporal distance in mind I will ask: What role does the French seventies play in contemporary queer criticism and memoir? And how is this trope tangled up with the hope of radical sex?

Taking *On the Inconvenience of Other People* as my primary example of contemporary queer criticism, in this paper I will unfold how the memory of the French seventies becomes a trope of utopian desire and political imagination in Berlant's thought. To unfold further how remembering the French seventies relates to the articulation of memory and sexual desire, I will refer to Annie Ernaux's *The Years* (2008), a collective memoir which invests a frustrated hope in the bodily and discursive freedoms of this time. For Ernaux as for Berlant, I argue, the French seventies is an object of longing which does not, however, hinge on remembrance of the embodied kind. Rather, this longing happens in the *writing* produced by the critic (Berlant) and the author (Ernaux), the medium in which it becomes possible to imagine a future that can accommodate the memory of radical sex. Ultimately, my reading questions whether the French seventies are not, indeed, a queer past for the future?

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Solo: Affect and 'Violent Archives': Against the Grain

Marie Lunau, (Roskilde University): *Affectivity & Violence in the Noisy Archive*

In our research on queer women* at the turn of the twentieth century, we study medical journals, police reports and documents from 'saviour' organisations/institutions, aimed at 'rescuing' girls and women from sexual 'deviant' behaviour. While these archives are rich sources informing about women's romantic and sexual relationships, they are also violent archives, as the sources stem from situations in the women's lives, where they were forcefully constrained to spend time in prisons, hospitals or institutions.

Where Spivak has famously asked, "Can the subaltern speak?", and, thus, emphasised the need to give voice to marginalised individuals, our aim is both to provide a voice to the women and to shed light on female same-sex relations in this time in history. In order to do this, we read 'between' the lines and 'behind' the condemning narrative on the 'surface' of the sources, as if the sources were a palimpsest. Our research calls for reflections upon how to unfold the world and daily life of female lovers, their relationships and their communities, when our glimpses into that world are found in/drawn from a series of documents that

condemned the women and their life styles. Hartman has described a similar challenge in her attempt to describe Black women's intimate relations at the turn of the twentieth century, as the sources informing about the women's lives are limited and one-sided. We are inspired by Hartman's practice of reading archival "documents against the grain, disturbing and breaking open the stories ... in order to narrate [one's] own".

While many queer historians talk about silent archives, our archive is decidedly noisy. There are many stories in our archive, including explicit accounts of same-sex relationships, but the stories are gathered by force and against the women's will. While a noisy archive can feel like a blessing, it also feels like a haunted archive. For instance, we have found love letters, which provide us with access to the women's own voices as well as to their world – but these letters exist in the archive only because they were confiscated by the police and hospital staff. Our excitement for queer first-hand sources is always accompanied by the haunting knowledge of violence.

In our presentation, we address the methodological and ethical questions of how to work with sources from violent archives. This includes a discussion about how we as queer scholars are placed in an ambivalent space, being emotionally affected by the violence against queers and women* in the past, as well as being guided by a longing to find queer people in the past and to 'liberate' them and their communities from the violence inflicted upon them.

Tijmen van Voorthuizen (Utrecht University): What the night makes us feel:

Researching the history and heritage of queer bars in the Low Countries (1920s-present)

There are two seemingly accepted notions when it comes to the place bars take in historical and general academic research on queer life: Firstly, bars were and are still important places for queers to meet others, exchange ideas, organize and have fun. Jeffrey Weeks called the bar the 'unlikely hero' of an emerging gay and lesbian subculture (Weeks, 1984). As urban queer histories became a popular form of writing queer history in the late 90s, other authors started documenting extensively the alehouses, pubs, cafés and other drinking establishments where queers throughout history would congregate, highlighting their importance for constructing forms of community, collective identity or queer subcultures, or simply as places where queers could meet others in a closed off, thus more private, space. (Chauncey, 1994; Hekma, 1997; Houlbrook, 2006; Jerram, 2011; Rottmann, 2022; Hilderbrand, 2024). Secondly: Queer bars have started to disappear en masse since the 1990s, to the great concern of their former patrons. (Mattson, 2023; Ghaziani, 2023). However, across the globe different kinds of (digital) heritage initiatives are seeking to preserve existing bars, and the legacies and memories of ones that have passed.

Most dedicated research on the history of queer bars and their heritagization has been done in the United States. The research presented in this paper explores this topic in the Low Countries. It delves into how queer bars were experienced emotionally and spatially in the past, and in so doing it is possible to reconcile the cultural and affective history of queer bars with current developments of their heritagization. Whilst it is undeniable that bars occupy a central position in memories and historical narratives of queer emancipation, historians have also noted that bars were experienced very differently by patrons based on their backgrounds. For example, working class queers may have found bars to be hard to access, others may have found bars to be exclusionary or downright discriminatory based on people's gender identity or ethnicity (Rottmann, 2022; Hilderbrand 2023). Researching the emotional and affective histories of queer bars will offer a perspective that does more justice to the complexity of individual experiences of bars and queer nightlife and challenges the notion that bars were semi-safe spaces that facilitated social and political organizing.

This research also delves into the spatial history of bars, not only with regards to how spatiality, emotions and affect are intertwined but also to help understand how bars situated themselves in local neighborhoods. Understanding queer bars' position both spatially and culturally in their respective urban environments is

necessary for a complete analysis of the emotional and affective experience of their patrons. Moreover, such an analysis provides the possibility for what Matt Houlbrook has called a ‘Geography of Sexuality’, a means of mapping and understanding not only queer bars and their patronage, but also queer city living in a more general sense (Houlbrook, 2001).

In this paper some preliminary results from case studies done in Amsterdam will be presented. The selected studies are of four queer bars in different time periods and locations that catered to different clienteles, with source material ranging from archival sources to oral history interviews and visual source material like photographs. The intended methods discussed above will be discussed in the context of these cases as well as some notes on the heritagization of (some) of these bars.

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Kate Davison (University of Edinburgh): “On Abandoning ‘Melancholy’ Methodologies and Embracing Messy, Queer Abundance, or, Who’s Afraid of Anjali Arondekar?”

In this paper, I will outline some of my research on LGBTQ+ aversion therapy and explain why a queer methodological approach to source materials has been indispensable, and aligns with Anjali Arondekar’s (2023) recent provocation for us to abandon ‘melancholy historicism’ and instead conceive of sexuality and its archives as sites of *abundance*. For many scholars of queer history, assuming such an effervescent posture will feel discombobulating. The proverbial conundrum lamented by early gay historians, compelled by archival scarcity to subvert police and court records in constructing histories from below, continues to loom large over the field. And yet, ‘to fix sexuality within vernaculars of loss’, suggests Arondekar, ‘(while politically exigent) is to refuse alternative historiographical models, to bypass imaginative histories of sexuality, full of intrepid archives and acts of invention’. Add to this the imposing weight of methodological tradition within the historical profession, evident in the high praise afforded to those who in pursuit of ‘thoroughness’ draw firm boundaries around their ‘archive’, as though primary sources are akin to ‘data sets’ and only complete ones will do. My work has by necessity taken an undisciplined (read: *slutty, queer*) approach to source materials, discarding neat borders in favour of a messier assemblage of psychiatric literature, queer archival repositories, oral histories, objects, private papers, ad hoc correspondence and other primary detritus. Far from lamenting the absence of an impossibility – an unmediated queer voice from the past, in my case first person contemporary accounts by LGBTQ+ ‘patients’ who underwent aversion therapy

– I incorporate multifocal reading and listening strategies, including from the history of emotions, to make an abundance of ‘voices’ audible, thereby enabling more capacious history writing. Queerly embracing abundance simultaneously affords greater ‘thoroughness’ while radically eschewing its necessity.

Bodie A. Ashton, (Leibniz Centre for Contemporary History (ZZF) Potsdam): ‘Don’t say [I’m] “very pretty”; I’m attractive’: Between the Lines and Against the Grain in a Queer Vice Investigation in London, 1964.

In 1964, police in London raided a suspected brothel in Holland Park. The madam, a woman referred to in police reports as ‘A.’, but who identified herself as one Paula Clark, was taken into custody, only to be accused of being a man. Clark’s intersection with the law is, in and of itself, a fascinating history, containing as it does remarkable details of the lengths to which police officers went in order to infiltrate her brothel, along with sobering accounts of the casual, everyday racism within the Metropolitan Police, as well as the stilted (and at times unbelievable) recollections of officers recounting conversations in after-arrest reports. Yet these reports, and the records that accompanied the court proceedings against Clark and her confederates, are the *only* available sources pertaining to the Holland Park raid. As such, they embody many of the issues facing historians of queer history of the twentieth century, insofar that they are not designed to recreate in faithful detail the microhistory of queer lives, but instead justify the actions of agents of the state whose vested interest lay in denying the legitimacy of those lives.

Sources, however, often have a habit of betraying their chronicler. While Paula Clark may not have left behind her own self-reflections, police officers could not deny the evidence of their own eyes. Thus, while the authorities painted Clark as a gay male sex worker in wilful breach of the law, those same authorities also recognised Clark as a transgender woman, and one whose socioeconomic situation, driven by the bigotry and discrimination in the London she inhabited, led inexorably to her arrest in Holland Park.

This paper examines the liminal space between the objectives of authority and state power, and the reality observed by agents of that power, with specific reference to trans and gender-nonconforming experiences of the European twentieth century. It argues that, by framing queer public life—frequently intersecting with sex work—as vice or ‘public indecency’, police and court officials often placed themselves in positions where their need to explain and rationalise their actions against queer people in turn affirmed rather than discounted their queerness. In turn, this means that a subversive, that is to say *queer* reading of such official records, while not adequately substituting for self-witnessing, nevertheless offers an ability to reconstruct contours not only of individual queer lives, but also the communities to which they belonged and the networks of support that often protected them from such state intervention.

Ece Canlı, (University of Minho): A Queer History of Queer Punishment

In recent decades, spurred notably by U.S.-based anti-prison and anti-homonationalist LGBTQIA+ activism, scholars have increasingly unveiled the historical and contemporary conditions of queer and trans* incarceration (e.g., Vitulli 2012; Stanley, Spade and Queer (In)Justice 2012; Pemberton 2013; Lamble 2014; Peck 2022; Brömdal et al. 2024; Human Dignity Trust N/A). These academic and activist efforts have exposed the persistent dehumanisation faced by prisoners of diverse genders and sexualities, who are not only disproportionately criminalised for minor offences, misdemeanour laws and survival-based activities rendered illegal (e.g., sex work, drug dealing, homelessness), but also, once incarcerated, endure systemic discrimination, sexual violence, and misplacement within carceral spaces (Mogul, Ritchie and Whitlock 2011; Shay and Strader 2012; Peck 2022). Moreover, research tracing the intersections of binary gender constructs and coloniality (e.g., Lugones 2010; Arvin, Tuck and Morrill 2013; Vergès 2019) demonstrates

that the punishment of gender non-conforming and sexualised bodies, particularly racialised ones, is deeply rooted in colonial material, legal, medical and spatial practices. These practices historically ranged from physical banishment and ‘corrections’ in penal colonies to public executions under sodomy laws, and their legacies resonate within today’s criminal justice systems. This is evident in contemporary enactments such as anti-transgender policies that restrict access to certain spaces or the use of solitary confinement, ostensibly for the ‘protection’ of LGBTQIA+ prisoners. These measures, however, serve to further dehumanise and violate the bodily and psychological integrity of incarcerated individuals (Canlı 2020).

Despite the growing body of research on these issues, however, two significant challenges persist: First, there is a glaring absence of consistent documentation and archival resources that could illuminate the global history of queer and trans* incarceration. Second, existing statistics and reports on gender and imprisonment remain confined to binary frameworks, a limitation exacerbated by the restricted access to and opacity of prisons as closed-circuit institutions (Penal Reform International. 2023). With these challenges and concerns in mind, this presentation seeks to provide an overview of the enduring gender- and sexuality-based confinement, even within the purportedly ‘humanitarian’ prisons of the Global North, focusing on their spatio-material conditions in particular and their impacts on queer bodies. By tracing the genealogy of colonial practices of ‘justice’ (Saleh-Hanna 2008; Taylor 2014) and drawing on the broader frameworks of abolitionist feminism, intersectionality and decolonial feminism (Levine and Meiners 2020; Kaba 2021; Davis et al. 2022), it connects contemporary penal justice systems to early mechanisms of punishing ‘deviance’. At the same time, while prisons are often regarded as among the most binary spaces in terms of sex and gender, they paradoxically also serve as sites where some of the most ‘queer’ relationships and dynamics can unfold. This duality underscores the complexity and queerness of carceral spaces as both enforcers of normative structures and potential disruptors of them, inviting further historical research, analysis and reflection on the possibilities of resistance and transformation within and beyond the prison system.

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Parallel sessions 2: 22nd of May Thursday 9:30-11:00

Stream: More than a thousand words 2: *Videos, cinema and queer pasts*

Marek Jedlinski and Krzysztof Witczak (Mickiewicz Uni, Poland): Queering movie as a source of history

The purpose of this paper is to examine the application of queer film as a historical source, focusing on the initial silent films. The title of the paper has been a reference to Polish pioneer of cinematography Boleslas Matuszewski's well-known essay *Une nouvelle source de l'histoire* ('A New Source of History'), published in Paris in 1898. Cinematography can serve as a historical source stems from its ability to record moving images while narrating a specific story visually. The emergence of cinema was accompanied by the debut of the first queer episodes. Cinema has emerged as a revolutionary historical source for two primary reasons. Firstly, it has created a narrative that is simultaneously both real and fictional, thereby opening up new perspectives on the depiction of characters on screen. Secondly, it has become a medium for the emancipation of LGBTQ+ people, playing a crucial role in familiarising audiences with queer issues. Cinema became a medium for challenging stereotypical ideas about masculinity by depicting dancing men and the first drag queen actress. The silent nature of cinema offered considerable potential for interpretation as a new and experimental historical source, and from the beginning, cinema offered the possibility of making allusions on the big screen that could be observed and interpreted in different ways.

Produced for Thomas Edison's label, *The Gay Brothers* (1895) depicts two men engaging in a waltz, a scene that would come to be recognised as a significant moment in queer history. Another notable example is the 1901 film *The Old Maid Having Her Picture Taken*, directed by Edwin S. Porter, which showcased a bold deconstruction of conventional gender roles. Gilbert Saroni, a prominent figure in the drag queen genre of short films, exemplifies the evolution of cinematic expression and the exploration of gender expression. They were short films.

The 1919 film *Anders als die Anderen*, directed by Richard Oswald, is widely regarded as a seminal work in the field of queer cinema. The film's significance lies in its depiction of non-heteronormative characters and its role in the historical evolution of queer emancipation. Prior to this, films tended to make subtle allusions to queer, but *Anders als die Anderen* was the first to depict such individuals overtly. The present paper puts forward the proposition of a methodology for the historical reconstruction of queer history, which is to be based on the concept of queer cinema. This methodology is inspired by Matuszewski's research concept, which considered film not only as a historical document, but also as part of history. Queer characters are not static. To illustrate this point, we may consider the narrative of a gay couple from 1919, which, when depicted on screen, captures the essence of their lives, their body language and facial expressions, and evokes their emotions. Despite the subsequent emergence of numerous hate images targeting LGBTQ+ people, our research posits that cinema has emerged as a pivotal medium in the historical representation of LGBTQ+ people, concurrently serving as a vehicle for the dissemination of their images within popular culture.

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Sarah Ernst (University of Southern California): "Strutting like peacocks": Perceptions of Queerness in Holocaust Video Testimonies

My current dissertation, "Queer Bodies, Holocaust Histories," uses categories of estrangement and (un)belonging¹ to conceptualize the different layers of community and understandings of self that emerge when individuals are persecuted on various levels. I use queerness as the central theme in a conversational history that looks at the experiences of Jewish, Roma, and disabled persons. Given the intertwined history² of these groups, I intend to explore this history through themes such as intimacy, movement, violence, and memory. Some of the questions guiding the research at this stage include: How is queer belonging forged and/or remade both during and in the aftermath of violence? How do survivors understand their interwoven positionalities in both times of immediate violence and moments of remembrance? And how does compulsory hetero and cis-normativity – both in Germany and in spaces of refuge - inform the production of queer knowledge across and among various other identity groups?

My work builds on scholarship that investigates the entangled histories of individuals living in the Third Reich, both in their contemporary time and in the aftermath of the regime.³ For the "Queer Past: What's Queer in Queer History?" conference, I would like to focus on the utilization of animal imagery among survivors discussing queerness in post-war video testimonies housed at the University of Southern California's Visual History Archive: for example, a survivor discusses lesbians as "strutting like peacocks," while another survivor notes that women who participated in sexual barter⁴ were "pets."⁵ I envision this

discussion to push concepts of the “predatory” queer body in a way that makes not only the sexual act *but the body itself* a “less than-human” entity.⁶ Additionally, by broadening the conversation to denote how survivors also used animal imagery to comment on other marginalized identities – such as race and disability – this paper aims to raise questions about how a more critical reading of video testimonies can be used to articulate the fluidity of queer Holocaust testimonies that goes beyond fixed identities or perceived acts.

¹ Nayan Shah, “Queer of Color Estrangement and Belonging,” in *The Routledge History of Queer History*, ed. Don Romesburg (London: Routledge, 2018), 262-275. This use of the parentheses around “un” comes from my time as a participant in the “Feeling and Belonging” Seminar Workshop at the 2023 German Studies Association Conference in Montréal, Canada.

² For example, Ari Joskowicz’s *Rain of Ash: Roma, Jews, and the Holocaust* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2023) and Henry Friedlander’s *The Origins of Nazi Genocide: From Euthanasia to the Final Solution* (Chapel Hill: The University of North Carolina Press, 1995).

³ See for example: Ari Joskowicz’s *Rain of Ash: Roma, Jews, and the Holocaust* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2023) and Henry Friedlander’s *The Origins of Nazi Genocide: From Euthanasia to the Final Solution* (Chapel Hill: The University of North Carolina Press, 1995).

⁴ Anna Hájková, “Between Love and Coercion: Queer Desire, Sexual Barter and the Holocaust,” *German History* 39, no. 1 (2020): 112-133. ⁵ Esther K., Interview 52181, Interview, *Visual History Archive*, USC Shoah Foundation, Jan. 29, 1990, accessed October 11, 2022, <https://vha.usc.edu/testimony/52181?from=%2Fprojects%2F1640931&seg=All>; Miriam F., Interview 54081, *Visual History Archive*, USC Shoah Foundation, June 05, 1989, accessed October 08, 2022, <https://vha.usc.edu/testimony/54081?from=%2Fprojects%2F1640931&seg=All>. ⁶ Work on the “predatory” body – especially of lesbians – can be found in recent works. For additional readings, see Samuel Clowes Huneke, “The Duplicity of Tolerance: Lesbian Experiences in Nazi Berlin,” *Journal of Contemporary History* 54, no.1 (2019): 30-59; Javier Samper Vendrell, *The Seduction of Youth: Print Culture and Homosexual Rights in the Weimar Republic* (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 2020); and Marti M. Lybeck, *Desiring Emancipation: New Women and Homosexuality in Germany, 1890-1933* (Albany: State University of New York Press, 2014); Anna Hájková, “Queere Geschichte und der Holocaust,” *Aus Politik und Zeitgeschichte* 38-39 (2020): 42-47; and Rosie Ramsden, “‘Something was crawling all over me’: queer fear in women’s Holocaust testimonies,” *Holocaust Studies* 26, no.3 (2020): 401-415.

Megan Wilson (University of Manchester): The lesbian period drama: Queering lesbian history on the contemporary screen

My interdisciplinary PhD research engages with debates within film studies, gender and sexuality studies, and lesbian and queer history. In this paper, I will explore some of the central arguments of my thesis, about the ways in which films construct and complicate our desire to ‘see’ lesbian histories on screen in the 21st century. I argue that films about the lesbian and/or queer past have far more to tell us about the ‘belated’ (Jagose, 2002) and ‘backward’ (Love, 2007) status of the lesbian in contemporary culture than about the time periods and persons these films purport to represent. Rather than disavowing these negative descriptors, I argue that belatedness and backwardness produce powerful affects, and can disrupt the naturalisation of history and lineage as progressive, uninterrupted links between the past and present. The primary case study for this presentation will be Yorgos Lanthimos’ 2018 black comedy film *The Favourite*, a film whose abject sexual politics, rupturing of generational time, and grotesque visual absurdism hold up a distorted mirror to the desire for a lesbian ‘heritage’ in the present.

The catalyst for my project was the growing popularity of the ‘lesbian period drama’ between 2018-2020, when at least 23 films and television shows were released that in some way dealt with female same-sex

desire and were set anywhere from the early 1700s to the 1990s. Many are based on historical figures speculated to have had romantic and/or sexual relationships with other women, and their popular reception has tended to celebrate film and television's capacity to (re)construct lesbian histories for contemporary audiences. More than just an answer to the increasing demand for cultural visibility and the rescuing of lost histories of sexual minorities, I examine how some of these films engage and experiment with genre, form, temporality, and the vexed question of lesbian 'visibility' in ways that unsettle and reconfigure, rather than affirm, conventional understandings of history, sexual categories, and representation. We might call this the 'queering' of lesbian history on the contemporary screen.

In my analysis of *The Favourite* (2018), I draw on the work of Jagose, who argues that the figure of the lesbian is that which has been most rigorously worked over by tropes of derivation and sequence in order to naturalise heterosexuality's 'original' status in culture. If, as Freeman (2010) also argues, 'lesbianism dangerously muddles generational time', we can see this disruption at work in *The Favourite*, as Queen Anne's ailing body and inability to produce a living heir are central preoccupations of the film. Anne clings to her seat on the British throne while entangled in an increasingly nefarious sexual triangulation between cousins Sarah Churchill and Abigail Hill, both of whom covet the power that comes with being the queen's favourite. Ultimately, I suggest, *The Favourite* is less open to recuperating same-sex desire in the past than it is about foregrounding the ways that sexuality is socially, economically, and politically structured and manoeuvred, reminding us of the belated, backward, and historically contingent nature of sexual categories more generally.

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Maria Emilia Munoz (Campania University): Reimagining queer pasts: Memory, imagination, and self-representation in *Duino* and *All of us strangers*

For queer individuals, the mind plays a crucial role as a field where one can negotiate, revisit, and come to terms with one's identity and personal history. Memory and imagination are essential tools in this process, both to reframe the past and to experiment with alternative possibilities. This presentation will explore how queer people use mental spaces to construct and reimagine their history, focusing on two case studies: *All of Us Strangers* (directed by Andrew Haigh, 2023) and *Duino* (directed by Juan Pablo Di Pace and Andrés P. Estrada, 2024). In *All of Us Strangers*, the protagonist, Adam, a lonely script writer, revisits and negotiates his personal history and his queer identity through an imagined dialogue with his deceased parents. This confrontation suspends linear time, mixing past and present in an emotional process that proves to be a means for Adam to achieve self-acceptance and to confront his issues with intimacy.

The protagonist of *Duino*, Matías, grapples with his own past by writing and editing a film based on his life. Immersed in the "masochistic pleasure" of remembering, he revisits a story full of regrets and missed opportunities. In this situation, he envisions the possibility of rewriting his past, having the protagonist take the chance he himself did not. Ultimately, Matías

comes to the bitter realization that “editing” the past is not possible. Instead, the only path left is to reconcile with his own history within the liminal space of the mind.

Using their imagination, Adam and Matías manage to rewind and reinterpret their pasts, a process which has a deep impact on their present lives. By analysing both case studies and by drawing on the concepts of heterotopias (Foucault, 1986) and queer temporality (Halberstam, 2005), the presentation will illustrate the fact that queer identities (and the narratives attached to them) are shaped by the interplay between memory, imagination, and self-representation.

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Antu Sorainen (University of Helsinki): Nike - A protolesbian life story in the shadows of two wars: building multi-art queer historical museum exhibition and public events based on spiral memory

This presentation explores creative methodologies and analytical dissemination innovations that reinterpret, reimagine and preserve protoqueer history as *queer*.

I will discuss (with photos and a short video) about how I combined private archives, historical protoqueer teenage diaries and interviews with intersectional and narrative research approach to cross-art live performances and museum exhibition to create a protolesbian life story in Finland in 2024-2025. This happened in the form of three public events, two journal research essays and a museum exhibition. They were “branded” with a certain image and a logo (with the help of a graphic designer) to create a coherent display.

As a queer historian, I set to work creatively through an idea of spiral history/memory and different languages of live art (modern dance, live classical music and photography) to uncover protoqueer/protolesbian life history, based on diaries from 1917-1921, family photographs, letters, miscellaneous historical archive materials and oral histories to reconstruct the lives, love and death of a small city borne teacher Nike (1903-1940) and her partner Helmi (1894-1982). Nike died young at the Winter War when she was serving in the voluntary defense forces, and the Russian bomb crushed her. My interest lies in the external and internal tension in young Nike's life when there are wars and revolutions but also a mismatch with the norms of inner emotions and desire. Nike found protoqueer enclaves and fulfillment as a citizen in girl scouts, as a university-trained teacher, in women's sport education, in her love relationship and in her family, despite of the oppressing Finnish criminal law of the time.

I will discuss how can I located a protoqueer life in the non-university small Finnish city, and then displayed it locally in the same city, in major events, more than 100 years later. Through the concept of protoqueer (ref. Gayle Rubin) and the building of spiral documentation of different sources and events I could talk about LGBTQ+ history in the time and place where historical subjects and societies did not use modern LGBTQ+ identities or terms. I will also briefly note the issues that raised with using private family archives to tell publicly the story of protoqueer Nike and her partner to disrupt the historical narrative that portrayed them as friends rather than lovers. In this, especially private letters worked as a sort of queer language lab.

Stream: Literature and the Arts 2: Inverts and Femmes: Literary Reading (against) Gendered Categories

Ave Palm (University of Tartu): Reading the invert in the 21st century: Conceptual frictions in the modern reception of early 20th century queer literature

When we read fiction from the past, we inevitably do so through our present-day understandings of social constructs. This makes the modern reception of historical works of literature an incredibly valuable source for studying the temporal intersection of the past and present, particularly regarding issues that have been as radically revised across the past two centuries as gender and sexuality. The early 20th century saw a discursive explosion of sexual science, while today we have an intense and politically invested debate on the proliferation of sexual and gender identities. The “definitional incoherence” which stems from a historical accumulation of different models of gender and sexuality (Halperin 2002: 12; Sedgwick 2008: 90) creates a rich terrain for the analysis of reader-response to literary works that explore past non-normative sexual identities.

I will focus on the reception of Radclyffe Hall’s controversial novel *The Well of Loneliness* (1928) by 21st-century non-professional readers. The novel has famously been labelled as the “lesbian bible”, yet it utilises the concept of congenital sexual inversion from 19th-century medical sexology, which differs from today’s mainstream notions of homosexuality. In lesbian feminist critique, this novel has been seen as a key text in lesbian genealogy while simultaneously being accused of misrepresentation because of its association of female same-sex desire with masculinity (Doan & Prosser 2002: 16). Examining the friction created in the encounters between two different time periods in the shared context of literature will give us a glimpse of how present-day people reconcile their understandings with the seemingly foreign historical representation of queer sexuality. How do readers describe their interpretation of sexual inversion – as “lesbian” or “transgender,” “feminist” or “misogynist,” “problematic” or “moving”? Is it perceived as a historically specific phenomenon that has been replaced by more “progressive” frameworks, or as a universally relatable portrayal, “ahead of its time”?

Drawing on examples from the reception of *The Well of Loneliness*, this paper will examine how the study of online book reviews can be used to explore the complex ways 21st-century people respond to the depictions of queer gender and sexuality from the past and how current understandings affect the interpretation of historical conceptualisations of non-normative sexualities.

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Mons Bissenbakker (Uni of Copenhagen): ”Being a woman has been the curse of my life”: Reading Ernst Ahlgren/Victoria Benedictsson trans

Victoria Benedictsson (1850-1888), who wrote under the pseudonym Ernst Ahlgren, stands as a key figure in the Danish/Swedish literary “Modern Breakthrough” of the 1880es. It is not least to the benefit of feminist readers that Ahlgren/Benedictsson have become one of the most biographically depicted authors in the Nordics, typically read as a cis-feminist heroine, striving for gendered autonomy. However, the figure of

gendered transgression and transgender identity haunts the reception of the authorship. The reception repeatedly conceptualizes the gender schism of the author and authorship through metaphors that casually use the metaphor of gender transition speaking for example, of protagonists who “do not want to be a woman and must not be a man” (Sjöblad 2011), and of the author’s desire to “reinvent herself as a man” (Björk 2008), although these obvious transmasculine possibilities are not further pursued. A transgender reading is thus paradoxically offered as a central and yet peripheral metaphor of Ahlgrens/ Benedictssons authorship. Consequently, three waves of feminism have all read their main characters (as well as the author herself) as cis-feminine, rather than transmasculine.

But what would it mean to take the trans perspective of Ahlgren/Benedictsson seriously? Taking my departure in trans literary theory (Prosser 1998, Eastwood 2014; Holmqvist 2017; 2018), I argue that some of Ahlgren’s/Benedictsson’s ‘female’ characters must be read through 19th-century sexological discourses on gender inversion (including the trope of being ‘born in the wrong body’). These perspectives open several obvious transgender reading possibilities in Ahlgren’s/Benedictsson’s work. My analysis revolves around the author’s famous last short story “From the Darkness” (1888). A canonical text in both Danish and Swedish elementary schools, where it has typically been read as defense for 1880s women’s cause, but which I believe can also be read as a transmasculine elegy. Whether viewed as ‘purely’ symbolic or as a realistic depiction of a lived trans reality, Ahlgrens/Benedictssons transmasculine protagonists must be read with an eye to through 19th-century discourses about gender inversion.

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Jens Rydström (Lund University): Re-visiting queer history as trans history

This paper aims critically to examine and discuss the findings of my earlier work *Sinners and Citizens*, written in the late 1990s and heavily influenced by Foucault and the emerging field of queer history (Rydström 2003; Doan 2013).

Following Joan Scott’s (2007) call to “unearth the disturbing questions about what seems sure or established in order to make new interpretative efforts – and so new futures – possible,” I intend to re-read my book and ask how discursive changes and the trans turn of queer history might have shed new light on my results.

In the 1990s, sexual desire was considered as distinct from gender variance. Any suggestion that gay men could be effeminate, or lesbian women mannish, was considered prejudiced. Indeed, while an organisation for Transsexuals, the Club Benjamin, joined the Swedish National Federation for Sexual Equality, the RFSL, in 1980 and pushed through the inclusion of ‘transsexuals’ rights’ in its statutes in 1983, it left again in 1986, now arguing that sexual desire had nothing to do with gender expression. It declared that there

were homosexual transsexuals and heterosexual transsexuals, but that there were no reason for transsexuals' organisations to form part of a lesbian and gay organisation (Rydström and Tjeder 2021).

Thus, when I wrote my thesis, this trans-exclusive discursive order seemed indeed "sure or established" in Scott's words, and I had no incentive to question that epistemology. However, among the 1,561 court cases that I studied, which concerned "unnatural fornication" between men in Sweden 1880–1950, there were a handful in which the prosecuted person was either described as a 'man wearing women's clothes', as a man 'shaped like a woman' or in other ways portrayed as a differently gendered individual.

How did I analyse those testimonies? In what way did I interpret the gender variance of the persons described? To what extent was I responsive to their possible trans longing or trans-experience? How did I negotiate the intersections of gender expression and sexual desire? In short, how would I want to rewrite the book now, twenty-two years after its publication?

These are questions I intend to discuss in my presentation, which will also contain a short overview of trans* history in Sweden.

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Angelica Stathopoulous (ICI Berlin): Fem(me) Pasts, at the literal and literary intersections of the flaneuse, the whore, the scribe

20th century literature is filled with masculine figures that loiter, stroll, and ruminate on their everyday existence in an increasingly commodified world. The *flaneur* digests the city through writing, and his accounts also come to nourish philosophical conceptions of subjectivity, work, boredom, and writing. The experience of masculine mundanity becomes the model for the experience of mundanity as such.

Historical accounts of city life, of public living, rarely include the perspective of feminine drifters. Women are predictably tied to the home, whereas masculine voices populate our understanding of the public. Historically, as Joan Nestle has showed, queer women and sex workers share the status of outlaw femininity. By exiting or being expelled from the confines of the home, they break an ancient link. The figure of the whore is overdetermined with regard to femininity, whereas the writer as feminine is a heavily underdetermined category. Challenging this historical conception, this essay turns to the *flaneuse* as a privileged storyteller about life on the street to ask: *what's femme in queer history?* How are stories about feminine everydayness told, and where are they located?

If the arcade, as Walter Benjamin noted, is the home of the *flaneur*, then the corner—the intersection—is the marked location for the *flaneuse*. It is at the street corner that the *flaneuse* lives her life and/or earns her living. The corner offers a spatial frame, but a methodological one too. Intersectionality, as coined by Kimberlé Crenshaw, is an analytic tool used to consider how different systems of oppression intersect. Aligning Crenshaw's metaphor with its material reference, the corner in this essay becomes a privileged

site for acknowledging the complexity and diversity of feminine existence. Listening to neglected stories about everyday public life lived in the feminine, this text pays attention to their gender variance and racial echoes.

Queer history, this essay suggests, is written not by way of a direct and clear vision, but from the point of view of the corner of one's eye, by way of a slanted gaze, through glimpses, looks. This perspective echoes José Esteban Muñoz' conception of potentiality, which provides an alternative vision located outside of straight time and space, as well as Anne Carson's understanding of corners as performing a choreography of exposure/shelter. Beyond straight passages of space and time, this essay turns to the corner for its bended, awkward, queer potential in rewriting *herstory*. Tending to stories told by feminine drifters in 20th century to contemporary literature, we get to know the potentials and difficulties of the corner of the city by way of a fem(me)inine historiography.

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Stream: Uncovering 2: Emerging Histories

Andrew Israel Ross, (Loyola University Maryland): Revisiting the Germiny Affair: Queer Sex, Police Reform, and the Vice Squad in Nineteenth-Century Paris

In 1876, the Comte de Germiny, a member of the Paris Municipal Council, was arrested for soliciting sex from a working-class man named Édouard Chouard in a public urinal. For French historians of homosexuality, the Germiny case has long represented the powers of the vice squad to harass men who sought sex with other men in public as well as an example of the power of sexual scandal to spread knowledge of the same-sex sexual subculture to a wider public. As such, Germiny's arrest has remained largely within the tradition of recovery history, documenting the existence of gay male life and contributing to our knowledge of subcultural formation in nineteenth-century Paris.

How, my paper asks, might we use the Germiny case to queer the broader histories in which he became enmeshed, particularly that of the police? Germiny was arrested as the vice squad was increasingly coming under fire from French politicians, British feminists, and members of the public. Germiny often appears on the margins of this debate, mentioned in passing, but not fully addressed. For opponents of the vice squad his arrest was an example of the threat that the vice squad held not only to working-class women, but to upper-class men as well. For the police, his case represented the risks of drawing unwanted attention to their work. For both, the case stood as an example of the moral depravity of the city of Paris. By bringing these views together, my paper shows some of the ways that queer sex shaped the debate over the place of the Prefecture of Police in the nascent French Third Republic (1870-1940).

Drawing on my current research investigating the campaign to abolish the vice squad in fin-de-siècle Paris, my paper deploys police archives, newspapers, and other public commentary to show that queer sex hovered in the shadows of the public debate over the morals police. In doing so, I show that a return to "archives that reflect oppressive or discriminatory structures" such as police archives and the mass press might nonetheless hold queer potentials. In my previous work, I have argued that one way we might locate such possibility is by listening to the archives' very structure in order to understand how they constructed the subjects that they sought to contain. Here, I show how paying attention to the margins reveals the queer specter that shaped (and perhaps ultimately doomed) this early effort at police reform. While the police and their opponents focused their attention on female prostitution, pushing instances of queer desire aside, queer men nonetheless come into view inwhether because they themselves interacted with working-class and prostitute women or because they were caught up in the very same strategies of surveillance. Ultimately, then, the Germiny/Chouard case illustrates some of the ways that the marginalization of queer desire by the archives only served to make it into something ephemeral, nonetheless haunting the history of the police.

António Fernando Cascais, (New University of Lisbon): Queering Sexual Dissidence in the Archive.

A critically queer approach to the judicial, forensic and psychiatric archives concerning the criminalization and the pathologization of homosexuals requires hermeneutical schrewdness. Endeavouring to retrieve about two hundred of processes archived at the Lisbon Police Judiciary's Center of Documentation and Archive, Lisbon's Military Historical Archive and the archives of the General Directory of Social Reintegration and Penitentiary Services of the Ministry of Justice, it must be capable of discerning the implied reading instructions inbuilt in the very fabric of the archive that misguide the researcher into complying with the naturalization and trivialization of homosexuality all the while exonerating stigma, abjection and discrimination as "business as usual" management of social control. The present qualitative survey focuses mainly, although not only, on the social characteristics and backgrounds of the individuals detained, and their way of life, including their gay and lesbian identities and modes of social resistance, the specific laws that prosecuted the crimes categorized as "vice against nature", the according penalties and security measures

and how they were enforced on them, how the police and the police “small claims courts” operated, etc. and the way the persecution of homosexual men and women evolved from the nineteen-thirties down to the late sixties: the what, how, who, when and where, with what effects of the question. Our basic assumption is that the legal persecution of homosexuals is not only instrumental, but constitutive, of the social construction of homosexuality in the Portuguese XXth Century and it purports to translate the conceptual grounding of the archive that obfuscates and erases sexual dissidence and resistance as evidence and symptom of criminal and/or disorderly behaviour. The archive is a materialized epistemology and, therefore, queering the archive must operate at the opposite end of any merely descriptive, literal, empiricist approach. It entails exposing the ways it “straightens” the lived experience of its targets into objects of scientific inquiry and technobiopolitical prime matter.

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Jay Collay *Sound, Silence, and Syncopation: Absence and Purpose in Queer Historiography, 1860-1968*

History often contains large gaps and silences which are not always intentional or easily discernible. Queer history in particular regularly finds itself intertwined with the notion of something being missing, magnified by several factors: documented and undocumented censorship of sources, the shifting definitions of sexuality that re-contextualise what it means to be queer from one era to another, a lack of direct genealogical inheritance and associated sense of being deprived of a legacy, and a persistent narrative that queer history did not emerge as a concept until the zeitgeist of 1970s America codified ‘queer’ as a cultural and political identity. Twenty years after Gayle Rubin described Queer Studies as a cycle of “deja vu all over again,” this research identifies various narratives of absence from history in Anglophone queer writings.¹ By examining queer historiography from the full century before Stonewall—an event which has attained a certain mythic status as the ‘beginning’ of self-reflective queer history—this paper challenges one conventional narrative of absence in queer history, while introducing others for critical examination. Items selected for analysis include both more ‘conventional’ histories, such as monographs reviewing literary history or unorthodox expressions of gender, as well as more informal documents including paratext of literary novels, cartoons for Playboy magazine, and private diary entries. These items serve to better address a wide scope of how various individuals now identified as ‘queer’ have cultivated their own historical imaginations. Working from a variety of sources, this research seeks to affirm Graham Robb’s conclusion that “[t]he lost heritage of gay men and women was mislaid, not destroyed,” and further arguments against historical narratives of sexuality-related repression.² After presenting several examples of both censorship and repeated historical amnesia within Anglophone queer history, this paper argues it is necessary to consciously accept the various

absences of queer historiography as not just epistemological reality, but as sites of refuge and potential that may yet further our contemporary historical imagination.

1 Gayle S. Rubin, “Geologies of Queer Studies: It’s Déjà Vu All Over Again,” in *Deviations: A Gayle Rubin Reader* (New York, USA: Duke University Press, 2012), 347–56, <https://doi.org/10.1515/9780822394068-016>.

2 On repression: Michel Foucault, *The History of Sexuality*, 1st American ed. (New York: Pantheon Books, 1978), 5, 7; quote from Graham Robb, *Strangers: Homosexual Love in the Nineteenth Century*, 1st American ed. (New York: W.W. Norton, 2004), 257.

Tom Hulme (Queen’s University Belfast): “Magic, folklore collecting, and queerness in 20th century rural Ireland”

Ireland has rarely been considered as a site of queer possibility before the gay liberation movement got going in the 1970s. The common assumption has been that repressive religion and government – Catholic and Protestant, south and north – successfully clamped down on any sign of sexual deviance. The little work that has been done – admittedly including my own - focuses only on the major cities of the island, Belfast and Dublin. Modern urban life, as is well known in the historiography, has long been seen as *the sine qua non* of modern homosexuality, but this “metronormativity”, as identified by Judith Halberstam, can often lead to a false dichotomy of the liberating city and the repressive rural. If the spaces and networks of the city could indeed enable queer subcultures to come into formation, so too could the privacy and sociability of the countryside, if on a distinctly smaller scale.

In this paper, I refocus Irish queer history on the countryside for the first time. I argue that a specific combination of rural superstition, sexual ignorance, and community self-protection allowed for a certain degree of queer possibility in the era before a strong discourse of “homosexuality”. I use two case studies. Firstly, the curious criminal trial of a magical healer, c. 1900, who persuaded men to have sex with him as a cure for their maladies, from bad eyesight to back pain. Secondly, shifting forward to the 1950s, the folklore collecting of Michael J. Murphy and his uncovering of local knowledge about same-sex practices in one rural community. Using William Pooley’s understanding of “doubt” rather than “belief” when it came to magic, and Colin Johnson’s concept of “benevolent toleration”, I conclude that many queer encounters – from the mundane to the mystical – could take place far beyond the prying eyes of priests and police.

- 1) Tom, Hulme, “Queer Belfast during the First World War: masculinity and same-sex desire in the Irish city”, *Irish Historical Studies*, vol. 45, no. 168 (2021); Tom Hulme, ‘Queering family history and the lives of Irish men before gay liberation’, *The History of the Family*, vol. 29, no. 1 (2024); Averill Earls, *Love in the Lav: A Social Biography of Same-Sex Desire in Ireland, 1922-1972* (Philadelphia, PA: Temple University Press, forthcoming).
- 2) Judith, Halberstam, *In a Queer Time and Place: Transgender Bodies, Subcultural Lives* (New York: NYU Press, 2005), pp. 35-7.
- 3) Colin R. Johnson, *Just Queer Folks: Gender and Sexuality in Rural America* (Philadelphia, PA: Temple University Press, 2013); William G. Pooley, ‘Doubt and the dislocation of magic: France, 1790-1940’, *Past and Present*, vol. 262, no. 1 (2024).

Stream: Global Perspectives 1: Decolonizing and Denationalizing Narratives

Henrique Cintra Santos (Freie Universität Berlin): *Queer Protagonism in the Global South: Challenging Hegemonic Narratives of the Queer Past*

Despite significant contributions by queer historiography in recent decades, colonialism continues to cast a shadow over narratives of queer identity and political experiences in the Global South. Studies on the emergence of LGBTQIA+ movements in 20th-century Latin America often perpetuate the "Stonewall myth," framing Latin American initiatives as mere byproducts of a unidirectional diffusion of queer political projects from the Global North to the Global South. However, queer historiography must challenge not only heteronormative hegemonic narratives but also those that reinforce colonial dynamics, portraying the Global South as perpetually mimicking models from the Global North. This paper seeks to spotlight processes in the development of the LGBTQIA+ movement in 20th-century Brazil that destabilize the dominant narrative of replication of North American and European political ideas. Drawing on Brazilian queer archives, the analysis focuses on three key processes. The first process examines transnational contact networks in Latin America during the 1970s. These networks were vital for exchanging knowledge and fostering emancipatory queer political proposals that addressed the specific realities of the region. Through correspondence between Brazilian and Argentine activists, it becomes evident that these networks contributed to the joint construction of a political vision for a queer movement tailored to Latin American conditions, particularly in the context of the military dictatorships that plagued the region at the time. The second process explores the movement's identity construction, which adopted an explicit anti-imperialist stance and sought to celebrate local queer identities. For instance, instead of embracing the term "gay" and its associated cultural connotations, early Brazilian queer activist groups identified themselves as "bicha," a term rooted in local sexual taxonomies. This linguistic choice not only reflected the specific realities of marginalized bodies in Brazil but also signaled a deliberate political position that sought to distinguish itself from Northern models of queer emancipation. The final process highlights Brazil's leadership in establishing a transnational Latin American queer network. With the rise of politically active groups—some of which, like the Grupo Gay da Bahia, remain active today—the Brazilian queer movement gained prominence in the late 20th century. These groups not only disseminated ideas, knowledge, and strategies across the continent but also played a pivotal role in demanding greater attention to queer realities in the Global South from supranational institutions. This leadership is evident in Brazil's active participation in conferences organized by the International Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual, Trans and Intersex Association (ILGA). By examining these three processes, this paper underscores the importance of queer historiography in embracing narratives that move beyond hegemonic economic and political centers, challenging Eurocentric and colonialist perspectives in the study of LGBTQIA+ histories.

Jamey Jespersion (Uni of Victoria): *ReQueering Berdache: A Counter-History of Indigenous Trans Womanhood*

According to the historiography, the slur *berdache* was commonly used in early colonial North America to describe sexually transgressive Indigenous men. Initially an ancient Persian word (*bardaj*) for 'kept boy,' 'male prostitute,' or 'catamite,' *berdache* entered Italian (*bardasso*), French (*bardache*), Spanish (*bardaxa/bardaje*), and English languages by the Renaissance period to specifically name the younger partner in age-differentiated homosexual relationships. Before lapsing in use across Europe in the eighteenth century, *berdache* traveled to the New World where its meaning evolved once more. Amidst an Indigenous world, *berdache* was more specifically applied to "men dressed as women," who early explorers believed could be found in almost every Indigenous nation. Despite this transition from sexual to gendered acts, historians of sexuality from the 1970s to today have largely studied *berdache* history through a lens of homosexuality. In the 1990s, Indigenous activists sought to reclaim this history through the creation of the pan-Indigenous word 'Two-Spirit.' Influenced by Western anthropology, and first spreading at a conference for gays and lesbians, though, this early movement remained focused on sexuality in a way that overlooked

this trans feminine history. Using trans- and ethno- historical research methods, my paper returns to the records of those collapsed under the foreign label of *berdache* to situate them within their own Indigenous cultural contexts of gender. Among hundreds of Indigenous communities, who we now broadly call Two-Spirits were known with their own nation-specific words — *tusládeyep* (like a woman), *stámmiya* (acts like a woman), *tuinikhatko* (man in women's clothes), *kekatsa'-nxwixw* (part woman), etc. Contrary to the historiography and movement, though, nearly all of these traditions depicted a transformation of gender, not sexuality. While a minority of cases concern trans masculinity (often clarified as 'female berdaches' in the sources), the vast majority concerned the trans feminine act of taking up women's dress, tasks, and cultural duties, whether or not this involved sex. Countering previous queer frameworks that have erased this gendered distinction through a focus on sexuality, I argue that the concept of 'trans womanhood' may more honourably illuminate the minutiae of these subjects' lives, many of whom undeniably lived as women. Surveying a series of early colonial accounts on the Pacific Coast, my paper seeks to *requeer* the *berdache*, and in turn Two-Spirit, to finally name and remember Indigenous trans womanhood — a lifeway that has been, until now, almost entirely overlooked.

Barbara Trojanowska (European University Institute): *Queering the Heroine: Gender-Crossing, Intimacy, and Class in the Legend of Emilia Plater*

This presentation investigates the intersection of gender-crossing, intimacy, and class in the construction of Emilia Plater's legend, a Polish noblewoman who assumed a leadership position on the outskirts of the November Uprising of 1830 against the Russian Empire. I explore how nationalist myth-making elevated her as a symbol of the Uprising and of patriotic sacrifice while simultaneously suppressing sapphic interpretations of her relationships and erasing her queerness to align her image with ideological needs.

Plater's life and legacy reveal the tensions between celebrating women's agency in nationalist movements and constraining it within traditional hierarchies. Her position was exceptional even in the history of female soldiers of the 19th century, as she did not conceal her female identity while assuming male attire. In the presentation, I argue that her gender nonconformity became a factor that worked in her favour rather than against her, allowing her to be accepted by her compatriots in exclusively male, military role. This exceptionality makes her story promising in terms of reimagining the history of women's agency and queerness in the 19th century. However, nationalist narratives reinforced rigid norms by erasing her gender nonconformity and suppressing the queer possibilities in her relationships. As both her companions were of lower-class status, their roles were often omitted from her story, silencing alternative readings of her identity and connections.

Using an intersectional analysis, I revisit Romantic poetry, early biographies, and archival texts to uncover the hidden complexities of Plater's story. The analysis allows for questioning the scope of her agency, the transgressiveness of her gender-crossing – against the narrative underlining her femininity – and a queer reading of her relations with female companions. I argue that the poems reimagine strategically gender and class to serve nationalist ideals. Women's participation in the uprising, while celebrated, was framed in ways that preserved traditional hierarchies and reinforced their symbolic rather than political agency.

Retelling Plater's story through a queer and intersectional lens challenges exclusionary nationalist frameworks and expands our understanding of the entanglement of gender, intimacy, and class in 19th-century histories. This approach not only recovers the richness of the heroine's life but also highlights the role of myth-making in both celebrating and constraining female agency, offering new perspectives on queer pasts and the narratives they inspire.

Jennifer Lundberg Hansen (The Arctic University of Norway, Tromsø): Queer and intersectional perspective on museum narratives

This paper examines the colonial encounters between the Norwegian polar explorer Roald Amundsen (1872-1928) and the Nattilik people during his Northwest Passage expedition (1903-1906), focusing on how his interpretations of gender and sexuality have shaped current museum narratives. Museum exhibitions that display artifacts and narratives from Amundsen's expedition play a critical role in either reinforcing or challenging colonial framings of indigenous cultures. Specifically, I explore how interpretations of Nattilik gender and sexuality – shaped by Amundsen's colonial mindset – are presented in exhibitions, raising questions about the challenges of inclusion and the complexities of responsibly represent other cultures in museums.

Three key questions drive my study: How did Amundsen document and interpret Nattilik gender and sexuality, and how do these interpretations reflect colonial ideologies? How have museum exhibitions framed Amundsen's encounters with the Nattilik people, and to what extent do these narratives perpetuate or challenge colonial perspectives? Are Indigenous perspectives included in these narratives, or do they remain marginalized?

Drawing on expedition narratives, diaries, archival records, and museum exhibitions, I employ critical museology along with feminist, queer and indigenous frameworks to critique how Amundsen's interpretations of gender and sexuality have been constructed, sustained, and at times challenged or reimagined within museum spaces. I engage with the concept of intersectionality, addressing how overlapping systems of colonial power, race, gender and sexuality shape both historical narratives and contemporary representations.

Beyond the specific case of Amundsen and the Nattilik, this paper addresses the complexities of representing colonial encounters in exhibitions on exploration. It highlights the potential for museums to possibly become sites of transformation, where indigenous voices are not only included, but where colonial narratives are critically interrogated. Contributing to discussions within critical museology, as well as feminist, queer and Indigenous studies, this paper advocates for integration of intersectional perspectives to create more nuanced and inclusive museum narratives.

Solo: The Politics of Queer Youth Liberation: Sex, Power, Agency, and Ageism

Amanda Littauer (Northern Illinois University): Whose Liberation, Exactly? Teen Lesbian Analyses of Ageism and the Queerness of Youth

Drawing from my book manuscript on queer youth histories in the United States between 1945- 1985, this paper situates the words and voices of teenage girls in the larger framework of queer history, making a case for the significance of age and gender as meaningful, convergent dimensions of intersectional analysis. Legal minors faced institutional, social, economic, and cultural constraints that were markedly different from those faced by adult queer and trans people. Their dependence on adults fundamentally shaped their material realities and everyday lives. Arguably, until the rise of the internet in the 21st century, relatively little changed across the long 20th century in the lives of queer and trans children and adolescents. What did change in the 1970s and 1980s was young people's growing *awareness* of what they were missing out on.

I argue that although queer girls faced somewhat less isolation and institutional persecution in the liberation era than they did in the immediate postwar period, they continued to struggle in serious and life-limiting ways that adult lesbians often refused to acknowledge. Facing confusion and alienation, teens appealed to adult lesbians for assistance, mentorship, solidarity, and sometimes romantic or sexual partnership. Same-sex desiring girls in the 1970s and early 1980s expressed their need to be seen and supported through their

writing of letters to public figures and personal essays in liberationist publications. Some felt the need to speak quite forcefully, accusing lesbian feminists of excluding and dismissing young women because of adults' anxieties about being seen as predatory, facing prosecution, or because interacting with teenagers triggered unresolved pain from their own adolescent years. Others offered exacting analyses of ageism as a form of oppression not unlike sexism, racism, and homophobia, challenging lesbian feminists to live up to their own claims to radicalism. Exceptions to the general pattern, a small number of lesbian youth successfully joined adult lesbian networks and leveraged activist resources and intergenerational personal relationships in service of their own freedom. Across the span of place and time, young lesbians of the 1970s continue to challenge adults—this time, queer historians—to account for age and ageism in the queer histories we tell.

Citations:

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Lauren Gutterman (University of Texas at Austin): Queer Innocence: Gay and Lesbian Youth Advocacy and the Politics of Child Protection

This paper examines the earliest wave of research about and social service provision for gay and lesbian youth in the United States in the 1970s and 1980s. Researchers and social service providers--predominantly gay and lesbian adults--saw themselves as advocates for young people, defending them against homophobic parents and peers. They argued that gay and lesbian youth were more vulnerable to mental and physical harm than their straight peers and thus in need of even greater protection. In particular, they argued that cultural and familial homophobia put queer youth at increased risk of sexual abuse and exploitation. The classic story they told was of a boy who turned to survival sex after running away or being cast out of his home because of his homosexuality. In making the argument that homophobia put young people at risk of sexual harm, gay and lesbian youth advocates powerfully reversed longstanding pathologizing assumptions that childhood sexual abuse *made* kids queer. By emphasizing queer youth's vulnerability, sexual and otherwise, they succeeded in raising cultural awareness of the challenges gay and lesbian youth faced and in directing financial support and public policies to gay and lesbian youth where none had existed before.

While by many measures successful, the argument that gay and lesbian youth were in need of special protection was not without problems. To begin with, medical and social service providers' evidence that gay and lesbian youth were at greater risk of sexual harm was questionable. In addition, the idea that homophobia was the sole cause of housing insecurity or sex work among gay and lesbian youth erased other contributing factors, like poverty and racism, that were far more important. Gay and lesbian youth advocates also erased the complexity of the gender and sexual identities of the young people they served, marginalizing trans, gender nonconforming young people, in particular. Finally, in emphasizing gay and lesbian youth's vulnerability, advocates fostered understandings of gay and lesbian youth as victims who were more powerless than powerful, more deserving of pity than admiration. In doing so, early gay and lesbian youth advocates furthered the idea that queer youth could not evaluate their own needs or sexual relationships and required adults to protect and act for them. This victim-focused narrative allowed gay and lesbian youth advocates to justify their own authority and their increasing leadership roles in previously youth-led gay and lesbian organizations. It also enduringly shaped how LGBTQ+ youth were and are popularly imagined and represented: in short, as endangered.

Tyler Carson (Rutgers University – New Brunswick): Skeletons in the Closet: Queer Debates on Male Intergenerational Sex in the Late Twentieth Century United States

My paper explores the as-yet untold story of one of the most repudiated, despised, and arguably persecuted gay activist groups in American history: the North American Man/Boy Love Association (NAMBLA). Founded in 1978, amid rising anti-gay sentiment, NAMBLA's controversial call to abolish *all* age-of-consent laws gained national media attention and made it a scapegoat for Moral Majority and family-value conservatives who sought to protect children from "homosexual child molesters."² While NAMBLA has seemingly been forgotten in the twenty-first century, its specter nonetheless continues to haunt the LGBTQ+ rights movement. With the rise of conservatives redeploying the trope of queer and trans adults as "child molesters," "predators," and "groomers," NAMBLA is the dirty secret that the LGBTQ+ movement wants to keep locked up in the closet. My paper asks: what might opening up these closet doors and tuning into these troubling queer history reveal?

I examine the debates NAMBLA initiated on the taboo and politically explosive topic of intergenerational sex between men and youth, showing how the moral panic over this issue reverberated throughout the early decades of the LGBTQ+ rights movement. I demonstrate how NAMBLA's initial legitimacy in American LGBTQ+ and feminist activist circles was undermined by its perpetual refusal to critically interrogate how its largely male, white, and middle-class membership informed its "radical" positions on issues of age, consent, coercion, and differences in power. I argue that NAMBLA's expulsion from LGBTQ+ rights by the mid 1990s indexed the growing intolerance towards and incommensurability of gay, mostly male, white, and libertarian ideals of individual sexual freedom, with the more mainstream, increasingly respectability-focused, movement to secure rights and protections from the U.S. state. By focusing on how gay liberation groups like NAMBLA both shaped and challenged the trajectory of modern LGBTQ+ rights, this work fills a major gap in the U.S. history of radical gay activism.

My research on NAMBLA pushes the boundaries of queer history, forcing the field to confront one of its most repressed and expurgated topics. In bringing the history of NAMBLA "out of the closet," my research contributes to a small but growing body of scholarship that is grappling with the "problem" of intergenerational sexual dynamics within LGBTQ+ history. My research on NAMBLA also augments and enriches interdisciplinary queer and feminist scholarship on moral panics and social deviance, critiques of child protection and the myth of sexual innocence, and the homophobic criminalization and policing of "perverse" sexualities.

² Fred Fejes, *Gay Rights and Moral Panic: The Origins of America's Debate on Homosexuality* (New York: Palgrave Macmillan US, 2008); Paul M. Renfro, *Stranger Danger Family Values, Childhood, and the American Carceral State* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2020); El Chenier, "The Natural Order of Disorder: Pedophilia, Stranger Danger and the Normalising Family." *Sexuality & Culture* 16, no. 2 (2011): 172–86; Tina Fetner, *How the Religious Right Shaped Lesbian and Gay Activism* (UMN Press, 2008).

Jonas Roelens (Ghent University): Age and agency in sodomy

This paper explores the judicial and societal attitudes toward sodomy and youth in early modern Europe, with a focus on the Southern Netherlands, juxtaposed against trends observed in Mediterranean other Europe. The analysis draws from historical records, trial documents, and contemporary legal texts, uncovering the complexities of age-related sexual hierarchies and the evolving understanding of juvenile culpability and victimhood.

In Mediterranean Europe, sodomy was often contextualized within a life-cycle model, where sexual roles were influenced by age and social status. Adult men were typically active participants, while younger males, often perceived as passive partners, were positioned within a framework of cultural norms tied to masculinity and transitional life stages. This paradigm was less rigid in northern Europe, where age and sexual role did not uniformly dictate sentencing or societal attitudes. For example, German and Swiss courts focused on evidence of ejaculation rather than roles or age, reflecting a different judicial priority.

The Southern Netherlands, as this paper reveals, exhibited an ambiguous stance. While minors accused of sodomy occasionally received lenient punishments compared to adults, these cases were not consistent with broader European trends. Trial records from Bruges, Antwerp, and Ghent suggest that minors, when prosecuted, could face punishments as severe as those meted out to adults, undermining the Mediterranean age-based model. This variability highlights the fluid and context-specific application of justice in the region, where age could mitigate or exacerbate punishment depending on circumstances.

The paper also investigates group trials, where patterns of sentencing might reveal implicit hierarchies based on age or perceived consent. While some cases align with the notion of protecting younger, passive participants, others display a disregard for age distinctions, with minors subjected to harsh corporal punishments or execution. These findings suggest a regional departure from the Mediterranean paradigm and underscore the multifaceted attitudes toward youth and sexual crimes.

Finally, this paper situates these judicial practices within broader cultural and religious transformations of the period. The rise of confessional practices and the focus on moral introspection may have influenced secular courts to interrogate sodomites more deeply, probing their motivations and histories. Yet, despite such inquiries, the welfare of young victims often appeared secondary to punitive goals, reflecting a premodern conceptualization of innocence, consent, and victimhood. This paper contributes to a nuanced understanding of early modern sexual cultures, revealing regional disparities and the entangled roles of age, gender, and power in shaping the judicial treatment of sodomy.

Parallel Session 3: Thursday 22 of May 14:00 -16:00

Stream: More than a thousand words 3: *Visual Sources for Queer History Writing*

Giorgia Ravaioli (University of Turin): Queer (Re)visions in Early 20th-Century Italian Photography

Photography has historically opened possibilities for individuals to create distance from heteronormativity and the confinements of subjectivity by providing ground for identification, disidentification, or counter-identification. Despite decades of scholarly inquiry into the intersections of photography and gender fluidity—particularly since the 1980s—the canon of queer visual history remains disproportionately centered on male authors. Women and non-binary photographers, by contrast, have received scant recognition, leaving significant gaps in our understanding of queer visual legacies.

This paper seeks to address these historical omissions by spotlighting the contributions of women to queer visual practices in early 20th-century Italy, a period marked by both legal progress and societal paradoxes regarding gender and sexuality. While Italy, through Justice Minister Zanardelli's reforms, became one of the first European nations to decriminalize homosexuality with the Penal Code of 1889, this apparent

progress masked a deeply conditional acceptance: homosexual behavior was permitted only insofar as it remained invisible. Against this backdrop, this paper examines the pioneering work of a non-binary couple whose remarkable photographic archive was recently uncovered in the municipal library of Imola by researchers of the national research project “Italian Feminist Photography”.

The writer and musician Guido da San Giuliano (male alias of Bianca Belinzaghi, 1861-1943) and Sfinge (pseudonym of the feminist poetess and noblewoman Eugenia Codronchi, 1865-1934) were both passionate collectors and producers of photographs. Their joint archive of over 3,000 images offers a glimpse into their personal lives. It includes portraits exchanged between them (occasionally in gender-subversive scenes), photos of the property where they lived together, and four albums that served as a symbolic space for the assemblage of family images from both sides to support, arguably, the notion of a shared fictitious genealogy.

Delving into how the couple used photography as means to challenge heteropatriarchal norms, the article highlights the documentary value of their images while arguing for importance against the backdrop of their sociohistorical context.

Jennifer V. Evans (Carleton University): Unlikely Allies: Middle-Aged Photographers and the Trans Camera

I am old enough to remember photo studios. They always seemed to be in strip malls, beside the card store and video arcade. You’d book your appointment, wait in the four-seater “waiting room” before being called in to sit on the generic bench, wall to ceiling covered with dark blue backdrop. My favourite were the disembodied head photographs we all got in the 1980s, with the person in the foreground and their head floating in space in the left-hand corner. Photo studios in North America seem to have devolved as far away as one might get from a place of artful creativity. In other parts of the world, thankfully, that does not seem to be the case.

The situation was vastly different in the Middle East, where a long history of family photo studios cheated the advance of time. Born into a Christian family in Turkey, of Armenian descent, Maryam Şahinyan helped create one such business in Istanbul called Foto Galatasaray together with her father. Şahinyan was particularly talented. She knew, instinctively, how to position the lens to capture a person’s essence. Soon, she was more sought after than her father or brothers for the way she wielded the camera. Part of it had to do with being a woman. She helped put people, other women especially, at ease. Her subjects sought her out for her skill, but also because of the safety she provided, where the most religious of them might remove their hijab and pose as they wanted to be seen to those in their intimate worlds.

The Şahinyan archive tells many tales. It was one of the few created by a woman, a photographer who generated over her professional lifetime a collection of over 200,000 negatives, all of which made their way into the archive. By all accounts, she was the consummate professional. She was strict with herself. She wore her hair short, and always came to work dressed in a crisp, white tunic. Like Van Leo in Egypt, another master of the genre in a place that was hostile to non-conformism, she never married. Her images reveal little-seen lower- and middle-class sensibilities in Istanbul. As with many studio collections, there are surprises along the way. Şahinyan’s archive includes images of same-sex couples kissing, playing with scarves and props, expanding what was possible in the shelter of her family business. In other cities across the Arab and North African world, we find studio portraitists like Şahinyan, Van Leo, and Lebanon’s Hashem El-Madani who captured glimpses of queerness, not as an identity, but as a form of expression, outside contemporary gender norms.

For much of the 20th century, across the Middle East, the studio photographer was a trusted member of the community. But access to cameras, film stock, development, costumes, props, and lighting also meant that

they had the equipment and privacy which allowed people to explore and experiment with their dreamworlds and aspirations. In the years before instant photography, these studios provided the opportunity for clients to mess about with props, stand posed seductively against a wall, or practice kissing. And sometimes, there was more. The poignant counter stare of the hairdresser among El-Madani's portraits, his hair parted whimsically to the side, is hard not to read as a queer sensibility. And even if it wasn't, the fact that it provokes this response is in and of itself compelling. Studio photography opened the possibility that personal intimacies could be played out for the camera, taking us into a world of freedom and discovery far from the usual spaces and places of sexual liberation. How to think of them mindfully, on their own terms, and in the context both of colonization and decolonization forms the crux of this paper.

Sigríður Jónsdóttir (University Library of Iceland): Queer(ing) Icelandic Performing Arts Photographs (1897-1967)

The first Icelandic performance of *Huis clos* by Jean-Paul Sartre by Gríma in 1961 marked the first time an explicitly queer woman character was seen on stage. Andrés Kolbeinsson (1919-2009) photographed the performance and some of the photographs show Ines, played by Kristbjörg Kjeld, looking at Estelle, played by Helga Löve.¹ Critics at the time described the character of Ines, and thus the characterization of Kjeld, as "cold" and "callous." However, the photographs belie this heteronormative interpretation.²

The Reykjavík Theatre Company was founded in 1897. The National Theatre of Iceland opened in 1950, although its foundation was laid in the 1920s. Concurrently, photography became not only a popular personal medium but also a public one with photographs increasingly used in local journals and newspapers to publicize cultural events such as theatre performances.

Icelandic performing arts photographs are scattered throughout various public institutions, associations and private homes. Some are catalogued, most are not. Some are digitally accessible, most are not. In several cases, photographs are the only visual representation left of performances. Textual narratives describing the art form, newspaper articles and theatre criticism being the most common, do not represent a complete picture of certain performances, especially when it comes to queer representation on stage.

Queer representation on stage comes in many forms such as explicitly queer characters, gender fluidity through role choices and costume, implicit suggestions through performance and participation of queer artists in performances to name just a few examples. This project represents a beginning, an attempt to compile a comprehensive overview of queer performing arts photography in Iceland during the first half of the twentieth century.

¹ The original photographs are located at the Reykjavík Museum of Photography. Only thirteen of them are digitally available via the museum's website. Other photographs from the series are available through timarit.is, a digital library of printed cultural heritage hosted by the National and University Library of Iceland.

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² Only recently the photographs for the Gríma's 1963 production of *The Maids* by Jean Genet were found at the National Museum of Iceland and are waiting to be studied more thoroughly with a queer lens.

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Mette Kia Krabbe Meyer (Royal Danish Library): See It in Their Eyes: Found Photographs and the Gaydar

Old photographs of same-sex couples evoke a deep sense of fascination. In mainstream culture, it is rare to encounter images of men embracing or women sitting closely together, sharing a kiss. The private nature of these photographs only amplifies their allure. These are people like us.

Most of these images are "found photographs"—pictures taken by unknown photographers of individuals who remain strangers to us but feel familiar through the act of looking.

In this paper, I reflect on the fascination with found photographs within LGBTQ+ media culture. The physical images are severed from their original context, disconnected from the moment of exposure and the people whose reflections they captured. Orphaned, they often resurface through collectors at flea markets or similar venues. Today, these photographs circulate in a new digital ecosystem, grouped with diverse images from various realms of photography. The advent of AI introduces a transformative dimension, poised to revolutionize how we interpret and use these visual artifacts in the future.

I explore the concept of photography's "presence"—its capacity to evoke a sense of having been there—and the particular value it holds when speaking about LGBTQ+ couples.³ I also examine the unique conditions under which this presence is experienced in the context of found photographs.

Closely tied to this inquiry is the question of body language and its interpretation within LGBTQ+ culture. The anonymity of these photographs means their queer significance is often ascribed through the act of interpretation. What gestures do we notice? How do we assign meaning to them? In this discussion, I engage with the concept of "gaydar" and Joan Scott's notion of the "fantasy echo" to reflect on how we construct connections and meanings from these images.⁴

¹ Roland Barthes: *La Chambre Claire*, 1980.

¹ Joan Scott: "Fantasy Echo: History and the Construction of Identity", 2001.

Stream: Literature and the Arts 3: Biographies, Autobiographies, Memoirs and Diaries

Silje Gaupseth (UiT Norges arktiske universitet): A literary debut or pure defense of lesbian love? Borghild Krane and the reception of the novel *Følelsers forvirring* (1937) in Norwegian print media

In 1937, the Norwegian psychiatrist, librarian, active Catholic, literary researcher and author Borghild Krane (1906–1997) published *Følelsers forvirring* (the disarray of emotions), a work which later has been credited as the first Norwegian lesbian novel. After being unearthed from the literary archive and elevated into the queer literary canon as a "homosexual pioneering work" during the 1980s and 90s, more recent literary

³ Roland Barthes: *La Chambre Claire*, 1980.

⁴ Joan Scott: "Fantasy Echo: History and the Construction of Identity", 2001.

research has shed new light on Krane's novel as a distinct message of acceptance of same-sex love during the interwar period – several decades before Section 213 in the Norwegian Penal Code was repealed.

My paper focuses on the contemporary reception of Krane's literary debut, after it was published by the prestigious Norwegian publishing company Gyldendal in late 1937. By examining how book reviewers reacted to the novel's crucial message of acceptance at a time of legal prohibition, I highlight some of the conflicting notions of queerness that surfaced in Norwegian print media at the time – ranging from conceptions of same-sex sexuality as sin or crime to personal tragedy, or even natural and therefore acceptable medical deviancy. This brief overview suggests that both present and past, as well as expert and everyday understandings of queerness existed concurrently. I moreover argue that the genre chosen by Krane – the literary novel – may have provided her with the freedom to address a potentially sensitive topic without being publicly “outed” as a lesbian herself, even though her personal life story may suggest otherwise.

The paper combines a literary and cultural historical approach to Borghild Krane and the reception of *Følelsers forvirring*. It is part of ongoing biographical work on Krane, whose life story also will form the backbone of my discussion. In addition to book reviews and other articles concerning same-sex sexuality in the Norwegian print media at the time, main empirical sources are interview and archival materials which shed new light Krane's biography at the time of writing and after publishing her novel. This includes an exchange of personal letters with a friend from Krane's student days, in which Krane herself reflects on the reception of her novel which she refers to as her “life work”.

Cheryl Morgan & Margarita Vaysma (New College, University of Oxford): Unsticking the Cavalry Maiden

While some stories achieve wide recognition some, for a variety of reasons, get stuck with a limited audience. That is particularly the case for transgender autobiographies, and has been since the earliest days of the genre.

One of the first known autobiographies of a trans person is *Notes of a Cavalry Maiden* [Zapiski kavalerist-devitsy] (1836) by Aleksandr Aleksandrov (1783-1866). He was a Russian-Ukrainian hero of the Napoleonic Wars who, despite being assigned female at birth, fought for his country and was awarded the Cross of St. George by Tsar Aleksander I. The Tsar also gave Aleksandrov permission to use the male patronymic by which he is known. Independent witnesses, some of whom knew Aleksandrov personally, have attested to the fact that he continued to live as a man, and insisted on being treated as one, until his death.

Aleksandrov's story might have languished in obscurity, had he not made the acquaintance of Russia's leading Romantic poet and publisher, Aleksander Pushkin. Like many a modern publisher, Pushkin saw value in sensationalism. He portrayed his protégé (much against the author's wishes) as a brave young woman willing to risk all for her country. Thus the story has stuck down the ages in Russia, with successive re-tellings making poor Aleksandrov more and more of a glamorous, romantic heroine.

Meanwhile, in the 1970s, Aleksandrov's writing career was discovered by American feminists who hailed him as a shining example of a successful woman writer. His autobiography was translated twice, with much of the gender ambiguity in it elided and erased. Once again the story became stuck, and disconnected from its trans roots.

More recently Aleksandrov's story has been discovered by queer historians. Our own work has shown how strongly he was attached to his male identity, and how he used the highly gendered nature of the Russian language to complicate his life story.

However, in presenting Aleksandrov to a wider world, we must be careful to avoid situating his story within the classic Western genre of trans autobiography. He must be understood within the social context of 19th

Century Russia. For example, his acceptance in the country town where he settled after the war is in stark contrast to the ridicule he faced in Westernised St. Petersburg. This in turn tells us not only about attitudes to social class in Russia, but also possibly to varying attitudes to gender in the vast, multi-cultural Russian Empire.

This paper will look at how Aleksandrov's life story has become stuck in various ways, and how we hope to unstuck it for a wider audience.

- 1) https://brill.com/view/journals/jwl/9/3/article-p390_6.xml
- 2) <https://notchesblog.com/2024/12/10/aleksandr-aleksandrov-new-sources-in-nineteenth-century-russian-trans-life-writing/>

Monica B. Pearl (University of Manchester): Women's AIDS Memoirs

The AIDS memoir has become one of the most common genres of HIV and AIDS writing. Indeed, autobiographical accounts of AIDS can be found across a wide range of genres beyond the standard memoir or nonfiction autobiography, including fictionalised versions in novels and poetry. When I was invited to write a chapter on AIDS memoirs for the *Cambridge Companion to American Gay Men's Writing*, I was painfully aware that I was constrained to leave out a significant account of AIDS life writing, and that was the fairly substantial genre of women's AIDS life narratives. In fact, life writing makes up the bulk of women's AIDS writing (as opposed to fiction, both short stories and novels and plays), for a stark reason: women have always been under- and mis-diagnosed for HIV and AIDS from the early emergency years of the AIDS crisis, and therefore undertreated and underrepresented. Women's symptoms did not "count" as AIDS so not only did women not get diagnosed as having AIDS, they often died without even knowing they had AIDS, and even more often without receiving an official diagnosis and therefore any treatment or accommodation. The shorter life span for women from diagnosis to death meant that there was simply less time to write: thus the often shorter accounts and less "constructed" or fictionalized stories.

Further, I started out assuming, as most people who think about it must, that men's AIDS memoirs were going to be about themselves and women's accounts of AIDS were going to be about other people, that most women's AIDS narratives were in fact written by women without AIDS about men with AIDS, often as carers and loved ones.

But I was wrong on all counts.

There are plenty of life narratives by women with AIDS.

Further, I found that almost all of men's memoirs are about other people also, even when they themselves are infected.

I propose for the brief time of my talk to begin to close the gap and to account for women's AIDS memoirs and life writing, towards a deepening and expanding of the history of AIDS writing more broadly, particularly in the United States and in the West generally. I am very concerned that the history of AIDS writing will leave out and leave behind the writing of women, which I fear is already happening. For example, so much of the life writing of women and AIDS is already out of print.

AIDS memoir and autobiography, it turns out, even when written in the first person and are purportedly about the self, are always about other people. There is less distinction, therefore, between those memoirs written by people with AIDS or HIV and those written by those who are seemingly uninfected witnesses or caretakers, and correspondingly therefore little difference between those written by men and women. In other words, there are no unafflicted writers of AIDS memoirs, and there are very few that are concerned only with the self. This was a surprise find, which I will lay out from having looked at most of the American

AIDS memoirs and autobiographies published since 1982, concentrating especially on the emergency years of the crisis but also those written after and more recently.

Kristin Svava Tomasdottir (independent): A small diary, a lost memoir and an old bookcase: The fragmented archive of life companions Þórunn Á. Björnsdóttir and Guðlaug Guðmundsdóttir

In early 20th century urban Europe, it was not uncommon for two unmarried women to share a home. Some of these female couples were life companions; they had a shared social life and finances, made shared plans for the future and supported each other in every aspect of life. One such female couple was midwife Þórunn Ástriður Björnsdóttir and Guðlaug Guðmundsdóttir, who shared a home in Reykjavík since around 1900 until they died within a year of each other in the mid-1930s. Contemporary sources name Guðlaug as a domestic worker or housekeeper in Þórunn's home, but Guðlaug's diary from 1928–1929 shows that their relationship was a more intimate one. Their home life was organized in much the same way a heterosexual couple's would, with Þórunn earning their livelihood outside the home while Guðlaug saw to the domestic duties. After their death they were buried side by side.

The talk is based on an intersectional study of Þórunn and Guðlaug's relationship, which joins the perspective of queer history with the perspective of gender and women's history and the perspective of the history of domestic work, and looks at how sexuality, gender and class intersected in the two women's home life. The main focus of the talk, however, will be on the archival challenges involved in the research.

Þórunn and Guðlaug are not known characters in Icelandic history and from printed sources, it would not have been obvious to look at the relationship between the midwife and her domestic servant as queer. These suggestions come from rumours and hearsay, sources which are not necessarily considered academically sound, but provide a fruitful standpoint from which to re-evaluate the published material.

The search for the two women's personal documents was somewhat complicated. The educated Þórunn was said to have written her memoirs, a manuscript of some size, but that was nowhere to be found, despite extensive enquiries in archives and among relatives. An unexpected one year diary of Guðlaug, however, was found under Þórunn's name in the Icelandic National Archives – Guðlaug's status as domestic servant reflected in the fact that she did not have her own archive. The diary became one of the study's main sources. Along the way, other source material emerged through surprising avenues, for example a bookcase full of books said to have belonged to Þórunn and Guðlaug, that came with its own fragmented oral history, passed down through generations.

The talk will discuss the archival journey of the research into Þórunn and Guðlaug's relationship as a queer history project and ask questions about what it means to look for queerness in the past, the role of the coincidental, the reading and re-reading of different source material, and the effect of the intersection of class and gender on the archive.

Maria Hymna Ramnehill (Göteborgs universitet): Bodily constructs: trans as narrative effect in Swedish literature, 1972 – 2012

How does postmodern narrative create trans effects in Swedish literature? My paper for the Queer Past conference is based on my PhD-project on the contemporary history of trans motifs in Swedish language literature.

My dissertation will trace literary trans motifs from a forty-year period, spanning from the start of forced sterilization of transgender people in 1972 to its abolishment in 2012. The trans motif emerges against the

background of important material, institutional and societal changes. During this period, the number of trans motifs in Swedish fictional prose novels and short stories seems to increase, from just a handful in the 1970's to more than that in a single year of the 2010's.

The concreteness of literary motifs, makes it suitable for comparing texts from different genres, periods and contexts, rhymes well with how scholars such as Susan Stryker, Wibke Straube and Sam Holmqvist, define trans as praxis, rather than identity, often rendered as *transing*. Taking inspiration from this, I focus on what Stryker describes as a trans effect: the jarring deconstructive "spectacle of an unexpected gender phenomena".

In analyzing trans as a narrative effect, I aim to look at trans as a situation rather than identity. Kadji Amin writes "there has never been a cis- or binary gender free from cross-identification or gender atypicality". Analyzing narrative situations rather than individual characters, can help deconstructing the cis/trans binary.

In the over 60 texts I've found, trans motifs take all sorts of shapes. From casual mentions and short episodes to novels with central trans themes and characters. My presentation at the Queer Past conference will focus on three texts. In novels like Peter Kilhård's *Fadder Teiresias vår* (1988), Ann Lagerhammar's *Det som ögat ser* (2006) and Ninni Holmqvist's short story "Kostym" (from the collection *Kostym*, 1995), the intricate play between narrative levels, voice and temporality creates trans effects where singular identity and chronological narrative is dissolved. These texts disrupt ideas of coherent narrative and singular identity.

Stream: Global Perspectives 2: Transnationalities, Minorities and Diasporas

Esther Lamberts (KU Leuven): Bringing the trans in transnational from the bottom-up. Queering the history healthcare networks (1960-2000, CA., US. BE.).

Although we know that trans healthcare became a transnational phenomenon decades ago, there is still a lack of a comprehensive understanding of how trans-Atlantic and transnational transgender healthcare came into existence. My research project aims to address the gap in historiography by exploring three transnational routes of transgender healthcare between 1960 and 2000. This period was marked by the growing recognition of transsexualism and the emergence of private practitioners specializing in gender-affirming surgeries, but it has received limited historical attention so far. So, how can we bring "trans" into the transnational? And how can we "queer" transnational connections in health care?

This talk will specifically focus on the case of "The Brussels Connection," a trans-Atlantic route for American trans women traveling from the U.S. to Dr. Michel Seghers' private practice in Brussels. In November 1984, the American nurse and trans woman Michelle Hunt left Saint Joseph Hospital in Brussels. She was the first of many American trans women whom the Belgian dr. Seghers (1932–2014) assisted with gender-affirming surgery (GAS). Hunt's journey set in motion a transatlantic route that became known as "The Brussels Connection". How did this "Brussels Connection" come to be, how did information about it circulate, and how and why did American trans women decide to travel to Dr. Seghers?

By combining discourse analysis, narrative study of archival materials, and oral histories, this case study reveals how trans individuals navigated, shaped, and "queered" these routes. The combination of archival research and oral histories ensures that marginalized voices are recovered and contextualized within broader transnational narratives of medical tourism and health care. In doing so, I approach the transnational from a bottom-up perspective. This talk reimagines transnational trans history from a queer perspective, emphasizing the agency of individuals and the resilience of their networks in trans healthcare history. This case study will deepen our understanding of the complexities within transnational trans history.

Churnjeet Mahn (University of Strathclyde): *Crossing the Kala Pani: LGBTQ+ South Asians and the Black Women's Movement*

On the 2nd May 1987 thousands of protesters gathered in London for ‘Smash the Backlash’, the first national black queer demonstration against racism and homophobia. Organised by Haringey Black Action, ‘Smash the Backlash’ called for a coalition of racialised gays and lesbians to unite against state-enabled right-wing attacks on progressive social and political movements, especially in London. One of the leaflets for the protest entitled ‘Black People Fight Bigotry’ carried a call from the Black Panther Party to stand with all oppressed groups which was accompanied by an image of the South Asian deity Kali. Alongside her name, derived from *kala* (black), Kali was used a figure evoking the revolutionary potential of destruction entwined with the creative potential of feminine energy. Behind the leaflet’s Kali was a generation of queer South Asians in 1980s Britain, many of them migrants or the children of working-class first-generation migrants, facing down state-sponsored racism and homophobia.

Despite the diversity of queerness in South Asia (and through its history), there is relatively little research on the history and practice of queer South Asian life in the British diaspora. This paper draws on existing influential studies of queer South Asian diasporas (Gopinath 2005; Khubchandani 2020; Reddy 2023) alongside recent work theorising queer South Asian formations in the context of abundance (Arondekar 2023) and historic queer diasporas (Wahab 2022) to identify the tethers that allowed queer South Asians to describe themselves as ‘first-gen black gays’ in the early 1980s. By returning to working-class, politically black, and queer and feminist coalitions in 1980s Britain, the paper adds a historical thread to the emergence of queer South Asian diasporic identities through the Black Women’s movement in Britain.

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Samantha K. Knapton (University of Nottingham): *Twice Displaced: Queer Experiences of Displacement in Post-1945 Europe* ***

The period prior to the rise of the National Socialists and the advent of the Second World War has often—with caveats—been portrayed as a queer ‘golden age’ in central Europe and, particularly, Germany. Less scholarly attention has been directed towards Germany’s neighbours, and especially those to the east. That queer communities existed within these countries is incontrovertible; by comparison, tracing the contours of those queer communities is complicated not only by the relative paucity of attention afforded them, both popular and academic, but also by the destruction wrought upon those communities between 1939 and 1945. This has contributed to a longstanding prejudice portraying east-central Europe as inherently anti- or un-queer, lacking the diversity or dynamism of its neighbours.

The queer populations of these countries provide a particular research challenge. During the war years, they were occupied at various junctures by Nazi Germany and the Soviet Union, their societies ravaged by wartime privations and targeted atrocities, and vast swathes of the population were displaced, finding themselves by the end of the war in refugee camps throughout Germany. Yet the goal of these camps—to repatriate as part of a ‘return to normal’ that would reestablish and ‘heal’ the shattered nation—stood at direct odds with the reestablishment of queer identity and community, for which displaced persons might face further persecution and incarceration. Thus, queer displaced persons faced significant incentives to obfuscate their identities, while Allied humanitarian organisations, seeking to promote social cohesion with an eye to rising early Cold War tensions, were equally incentivised to suppress or otherwise deny potentially ‘disruptive’ queer communal networks and ties.

This paper takes as its departure point a seemingly irreconcilable problem: how do we as historians draw attention to histories that have not just been ‘hidden’, but indeed wholesale elided? How do we satisfy the demands of recent historiography to recentre refugee voices and agency with the deafening archival silence/ing of queer voices within the postwar refugee experience? Acknowledging the requirement to apply queer historical lenses, I posit that it is only through creative engagements with extant sources, using methodologies in conversation with other disciplines such as anthropology, media studies, sociology and others, that we may begin to chip away at the layers that have heretofore hidden the histories of queer postwar displaced persons from view, allowing us the potential to reconstruct lives that have hitherto been lost to us.

Peter Edelberg (University of Copenhagen): Modes of methodological nationalism

Danish queer history has since its inception in the 1980s and 1990s been written in a peculiarly ‘methodological nationalist’ mode. The state, or rather the nation of Denmark, has been taken as the unquestioned and unreflected point of departure for most of the more significant studies into gay and lesbian history (e.g. von Rosen 1993, Lützen 1986, Edelberg 2003, Nebeling Petersen 2013, Nyegaard 2018, Ipsen 2020).

This is not a particular Danish trend, but a worldwide trend in queer history. However, scholars are working these years to expand our horizon, transnationalizing queer history, and free queer history from the rather ‘straight’ space and time of the nation state. Queers, queer activism and queer imaginaries have rarely in history been determined by the borders of the nation state, which often did not welcome or make room for queers. They were often ‘those without a fatherland’ in Herman Bang’s words, and thus looked, dreamed and worked across borders.

Explanations for the development of Danish queer history look less convincing when seen in a transnational light. Classic explanations include liberal mindedness (Bech 1992), homonormativity (Lützen 1998, Søland 1998), and homonationalism (Nebeling Petersen 2013). If we consider larger units than the nation state, e.g. Scandinavia or Europe, these explanations seem less strong. Why did Sweden and Norway reach the same rights for gays and lesbians as Denmark, if a particular Danish liberal mindedness was the cause? Why did other countries that are less xenophobic than Denmark and with much less strict immigration laws, e.g. Sweden up until recently, mirror the Danish development in gay and lesbian rights, if an aggressive Danish homonationalism was the cause?

In my talk, I will discuss the genealogy of Danish and Scandinavian queer history writing, and look at competing, but often overlooked, trends of comparative and transnational stories. I will suggest paths away from methodological nationalism, and show that we must deconstruct the nation state as the privileged *locus* for queer history. I will show that we can reach other conclusions than the ‘paranoid readings’ of unmasking particular ideologies behind the development of gay and lesbian rights, and, at the same time that we can carry the tradition of gay and lesbian or queer history writing with us, also develop it into a more constructive mode that fits the twenty-first century.

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Stream: Uncovering 3: Personals and zines as historical sources to queer lives

Sofia Bakhsh (University of Copenhagen): Public Desires: Queer Women in Personal Ads

The study of early Danish lesbian history has been shaped by two primary research traditions. The first, rooted in the women's history movement of the 1980s, has centred on 19th-century bourgeois female friendships. Letters, diaries, and poems preserved from these relationships provide valuable insights into how bourgeois women expressed their love for one another. However, this source material is limited to a specific, privileged social class and is heavily influenced by the gender ideals of the period, such as chastity, piety, modesty, and religion.

More recent scholarship seeks to expand class representation by including working-class women in the historical narrative. Both Danish and international scholars have turned to alternative sources and methodologies in search of new perspectives. The analysis of 19th-century sexology case studies represents one such approach, shedding light on working-class women, poor folk, and female sexuality. However, this material is mediated by its institutional context, with sexological studies often framing women—particularly those engaged in prostitution—as criminal, sexually deviant, and subject to moral condemnation and medical scrutiny.

These two research traditions have thus far dominated the historiography of Danish lesbian history, yet both are marked by noteworthy limitations. The private letters of bourgeois women provide a rich narrative of their experiences but represent only a small, privileged segment of society. Conversely, sexological studies illuminate aspects of women's romantic and sexual practices but constrain the histories of working-class women to narratives of prostitution, coercion, and violence. In this context, I propose that anonymous personal ads can serve as a novel source genre, bridging the gap between these two research traditions by

providing insight into the voices of both working-class and bourgeois women, while also serving as a medium through which they could express their sexuality.

In my talk, I will argue that personal ads published in newspapers offer an opportunity to broaden both gender and class representations within Danish queer history. The popular origins of this source material, combined with its anonymous nature, provide a lens through which to examine new representations of love between women. At a time when contemporary language to describe queerness and sexuality was not yet established, these personal ads reveal a popular perspective on prevailing norms and gendered expectations.

Personal ads thus have the potential to expand our understanding of 19th-century views on female queer sexuality. Their anonymity gives voice to otherwise marginalized groups and opens spaces for queer possibilities. A linguistic and methodological analysis of these texts reveals patterns that convey class, socioeconomic status, and expressions of sexuality. While the anonymity of the ads precludes linking them to specific individuals, they nonetheless offer valuable insights into the lives of working-class women, domestic servants, and bourgeois women in search of love and sexual relationships.

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Colin O. Connel (Rutgers University): Smalltown boys (personals from 1980s)

This paper challenges the prevailing spatial assumption of the New British Queer Historiography that men born outside of London could only "become queer" after relocating to the city. Epitomized in Bronski Beat's 1984 gay anthem "Smalltown Boys," this closet model narrative tells the story of a young Scottish gay man

who, after experiencing homophobia, leaves his provincial hometown to find “answers” and “love” in London. By analyzing *Contact: The Magazine for Men to Meet Men*, a Thatcher-era gay men’s personal advertisements magazine, I complicate this familiar trope, offering a more nuanced consideration of queer Celtic men’s identities and mobilities in 1980s Britain.

Contact is a pocket-sized, black-and-white booklet containing roughly 500 ads from men seeking everything from meaningful companionship to fleeting sexual encounters. Sold for £1 in London’s nightclubs, bookshops, and sex stores, *Contact* sits at the tail end of a 200-year history of queer men’s (commercialized) desires in 19th and 20th century London, Britain’s “sexual metropolis.” At first glance, *Contact* appears to be a characteristic artifact of the 1980s London gay scene. However, a closer reading of the magazine reveals a much more intricate, multifaceted geography of queer Celtic male life across Britain, one which disrupts historians’ presumptions concerning where queer identities can be formed.

Of the 500 or so men who published ads in *Contact*’s debut issue, 12 were from Wales, Scotland, or Ireland. These Celtic men, although engaged with London’s gay scene, led rich and vibrant queer lives beyond the UK’s capital – or nonetheless ventured to London without severing their Celtic ties. In this paper, I read *Contact* against the grain to recuperate the fragmentary lives of these 12 queer Celtic men, unraveling the complex (and sometimes contradictory) spatial imaginaries that shaped their desires for love, sex, intimacy, and community. This paper asks: *How can we read – and what does it mean to read – the Celtic queer in London?*

While the “Smalltown Boys” narrative suggests a straightforward journey toward self-discovery and urban queer life within a linear, progressive framework, this paper argues that such a narrative oversimplifies the spatial-temporal complexities of queer Celtic male life in Thatcherite Britain. For the 12 queer Celtic men in *Contact*, London was not their sole site of queer transformation; rather, it was one of many intersecting spaces where their layered identities and desires took shape – sometimes in tension with, sometimes in defiance of, their own local, regional, or national histories.

This paper examines queer Celtic male life within a historiography that links same-sex relationships and sexual practices to a London-centric history. By focusing on the Celtic queer, it highlights how gay men’s identities and mobilities in the 1980s were wrought by multiple, overlapping geographies, challenging the assumption that queer self-actualization could only occur in urban centers like London. Using a rural queer studies approach, this paper works to redefine how historians conceptualize LGBTQ+ histories, urging a reevaluation of the innumerable spaces where queer lives transpire.

Suus van der Berg (Independent): The Link-trial (1921) and the formation of queer communications networks: a personal history of the personals

From 1915 to 1921, the *Link*, a non-matrimonial monthly dedicated to personal advertisements, provided people from all walks of life the opportunity to connect with each other through its pages. The relative anonymity of the paper, combined with its explicit non-matrimonial claim, made the *Link* especially popular with men looking for same-sex contacts. The *Link* gained infamy in 1921, when it was brought to a very public trial. The Metropolitan Police arrested four men on conspiracy charges and charges of (attempting to procure) gross indecency: Alfred Barrett, the proprietor of the *Link*, William Ernest Hunter Smyth, a library clerk from Belfast who’d advertised in the *Link*, and two of his correspondents, demobilised soldier Geoffrey Bevis Ingman Smith from Enfield and Walter Stuart Birks, an eccentric self-styled Bohemian from the Isle of Man. All four were sentenced to two years imprisonment with hard labour at Wormwood Scrubs Prison.

Thus far, the *Link*, the trial, and the men involved have received very little academic attention. The most notable contribution lacks depth and contains errors, and unfortunately relies on stereotypical assumptions based on an imagined dichotomy in queer culture. Earlier accounts of the *Link* and the trial have also primarily used biased sources, namely the Metropolitan police file kept at the National Archives, and newspapers. The police recorded and summarised the rather explicit correspondence they found as evidence. This allows us to partially reconstruct the queer communications network surrounding the *Link*, but only through the selective eye of what the police thought important or condemning enough to record. While these sources contain essential information, they also had their minds made up already about those on trial, referring to them as “miserable creatures”.

While the function of the personals in queer subcultures and -lives has been a topic in research aimed at the period after 1950, much less research has been extended to this topic prior to 1930. This paper aims to investigate the role of the *Link* and personal advertisements in the functioning and formation of queer communications networks and subcultures in early twentieth century Britain through a reconstruction of the lives of Birks, Smyth, and Smith. This reconstruction also aims to, for the first time, tell their histories as much on their own terms as possible and beyond the prejudice and hostile sources of the police, court, and the press. Methods of family history, genealogy, microhistory, and historical biographies all have their own issues when using them in queer history, but also allow the historian to get much closer to their subject. Through the resulting biographies, I argue that the *Link* provided queer men the ability to form extensive social and sexual communicative networks despite criminalisation, and that these networks taught men to navigate their desires and queer culture, both in the 1910s as well as later in life.

- 1) Cocks, 3-23. Cocks makes multiple mistakes in citations, and on numerous occasions confuses Smith and Smyth, and most notably does not go beyond the Metropolitan Police file and a newspaper photograph of Smith.
- 2) “‘Link’ Sentences,” *The Times* (11 June 1921).
- 3) See, for example, Martin Meeker’s *Contacts Desired: Gay and Lesbian Communications and Community, 1940-1970s* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2006), Daniel Harris “The Evolution of the Personals in Gay Romance” in *The Rise and Fall of Gay Culture*, 40-63 (New York: Ballantine Books, 1997), or H.G. Cocks *Classified: the Secret History of the Personal Column* (London: Arrow Books, 2010).
- 4) Family history and memory provided me with invaluable sources, stories, and context during my research. Without the contributions from Birks and Smith’s families, my research would not have been possible. Out of respect and in accordance with the wishes of Smith’s family, I have anonymized some elements in his story. However, I strive to write an as historically accurate reconstruction as possible: this includes problematic aspects, although I hope I have managed to communicate these elements with respect for living relatives.

Charlie Bert a Fischer (Technical University Berlin): Queering Historiography: On the Potential of Zine-Making as Method.

Zines and zine-making famously withdraw from being defined. Zine Studies have described zine method, among other, as practices of fan, feminist, environmental and punk movements. (Damon et al. 2022, Legendre 2023) Often, zines possess a syntax closely related to that of a collage. They can be made from snippets of texts and graphics and play with layout; zine-making is a practice of arranging, attempting and wondering. On basis of these characteristics, it holds potential for the craft of historical research, especially for queering the methods of Queer and Trans History further.

My argument is that a zine can create a communication platform for historical actors, historical sources, the historian and the reader. In doing so, zines queer the relations between these actors. An academical text usually is a product of a historian's empirical research in order to find satisfying answers for questions about the past. A zine, on the other hand, can reveal that process, and not only its outcomes. It can map the engagement of the historian with their material. In my conception of the historian as a zine-maker, they step down from a place of fail-proof argumentation and create room for pieces of epistemic value to speak to each other. That way, historical sources can become not just means to an end in order to illustrate queer and trans pasts. Instead, they are granted an own agency. Additionally, as Zines Studies have pointed out, zine-making is not bound to the neocolonial and neoliberal university, archive or publishing house. Zines can be both accessed and created by a variety of individuals and collectives, undermining power dynamics and barriers of who gets to write and read histories. (Damon et al. 2022)

In my understanding of a zine as conversational space for material, it functions as a place of fact assembly. I argue that zines can therefore become alternative micro-archives. (Bühner 2019: 243) They offer ways of pointing to archival silences and violence, and staying sceptical of easily constructed master narratives – strategies that have been discussed by scholars critical of power dynamics in historical research. (Hil 2019, Trouillot 1995: 26) I argue that zine-making can thus move Queer and Trans History away from writing tidy portrayals about past subjects, and closer towards collecting historicities; embracing a “strangeness of the past”, rather than colonising it. (Long, Snorton and Ochoa in Bychowski et al. 2019: 681)

To conclude, in my conception, zines can be platforms that queer the relation between historical actors, materials, the historian and the reader. As such micro-archives, they showcase the historiographical method as a process of assembling and questioning, instead of declaration of evidence. Instead of constructing master narratives, a Queer and Trans History that employs zine making as method gets to embrace complex and contradictory actors and sources, and to hold space for a multiplicity of historicities. (Stryker/Aizura 2013) With reference to Ochoa, zine-making could “reshape paradigms of historicity and transform history as a field of study”. (Ochoa in Bychowski et al. 2019: 682)

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Parallel session 4: Friday 23rd of May, 10:30–12:30

Stream: More than a thousand words: Visual and Textured Sources for Queer History

Tuula Juvonen (Tampere University): Picturing Hilda Käkikoski: Juxtaposing Photography with Archival Texts

The Finnish teacher, suffragette, and a MP Hilda Käkikoski (1864–1912) left behind an estate with her letters and diaries, which her friends donated to the archives of Finnish Women's Association. Of those materials two volumes (Hainari 1913, 1916) depicting Käkikoski's thoughts were edited, along with a biography (Karilas 1934). Käkikoski features also in several other biographical volumes (e.g. Jauhiainen O & A 1929). In my paper I focus on the photographic images printed in those books and juxtapose them with the published and archived materials.

My intention is to challenge and question the heteronormative narrative presented in printed textual sources. I focus instead on the story told by the accompanying "silent" images, which may reveal another story, especially when backed up with archived ego-documents, in which Käkikoski voices her own thoughts.

The results point out how the instances of same-sex intimacy will be told differently – or withheld altogether – in different times and for different audiences, which calls for caution and encourages the use of a variety of sources before jumping into conclusions.

Christa Vogelius (University of Southern Denmark): Photographic Self-Representation in Autobiography of an Androgyne (1918)

This paper takes its starting point in Joanne Meyerowitz's suggestion that historical queer texts can "anachronize the present" by showing us "that our own ways of seeing the world are contingent, curious, and changeable." Through an analysis of images and text in Ralph Werther's *Autobiography of an Androgyne* (1918), I argue that queer history offers a means of understanding the present, as well as of challenging and reframing it. Werther, who also wrote under the pseudonyms Earl Lind and Jennie June, identified alternately as an "androgyne," "invert," "urning" and "fairie," and his autobiographical text, the first in a series of three books advocating for the rights of the queer community, offers a snapshot of a historical moment in which sexual terminology radically conflated sexual orientation and gender identity. Some of the practices and identities that he describes exist as conceptual categories today, but others are not coded into current sexological language, and these gaps offer opportunities to interrogate our own norms and assumptions. As Meyerowitz concludes, the gap between the present and the past is "perhaps so confounding (or so queer) that it just gets swept to the side. And it reminds me that we need to listen to the whole story, to pay respect to the narratives of the past, and not just pluck out the conceptual categories that we traffic in today."⁵

In my analysis, I pay particular attention to the photographic self-portraits that Werther includes in his text, one of which is the author posed as a "Modern Living Replica of the Ancient Greek Statue, 'Hermaphroditos'" and another of which is a reproduction of the statue itself. Using artistic reference as an alternative to clinical sexological imagery, Werther taps into an earlier history's queer vocabulary to define his identity, modeling the ways that we might return to his text to expand and question our own terminology.

⁵ Joanne Meyerowitz, "Thinking Sex with an Androgyne," *GLQ: A Journal of Lesbian and Gay Studies* 17, no.1 (2011), 103.

¹ Joanne Meyerowitz, "Thinking Sex with an Androgyne," *GLQ: A Journal of Lesbian and Gay Studies* 17, no.1 (2011), 103.

Sikha Mohanty (IIT Patna): Rethinking Hijra histories of sex work in India

Hijras, India's culturally specific transgender community, occupy a contested space where divinity and deviance collide. Historically, they were revered as intermediaries of divine power, yet colonial interventions rendered them aberrant, stripping them of agency and relegating them to societal margins. This paper examines Hijras' engagement in sex work through their own narratives, aiming to dismantle the stigma attached to both transgender identities and sexual labour. The documentaries *Eunuchs: India's Third Gender* (1991), *Main Hijra Hoon: A Eunuch Named Sunita* (1997), *Let the Butterflies Fly* (2012), *The Third Half* (2017), *Hijras, the Kinnar's Daughters* (2019) thus become tools to interrogate how deviance, as defined by heteronormative and colonial frameworks, can be reclaimed as a site of resistance and survival.

Colonialism institutionalized the marginalization of Hijras by enforcing rigid binaries of male and female, criminalizing their existence through mechanisms like the Criminal Tribes Act of 1871. This act not only erased pre-colonial acceptance of non-binary identities but also perpetuated their stereotyping as predatory and immoral. Such state-sanctioned "truths" continue to inform public perceptions, reducing Hijras to caricatures of abjection and ridicule. These stereotypes, amplified by Bollywood and mainstream media, obscure the nuanced realities of Hijra lives, where survival often requires embracing professions such as sex work, not as a choice but as a necessity in a deeply exclusionary society.

Through the lens of queer theory, this paper explores how sex work becomes a mode for Hijras to navigate the intersections of love, survival, and societal rejection. It argues that embracing deviance not only reclaims agency but also redefines societal norms of gender and sexuality. By occupying spaces deemed deviant, Hijras challenge heteronormative structures and assert their presence in a society that otherwise marginalizes them. The documentaries under analysis reveal how Hijras reclaim narratives of survival, expressing their humanity, desire, and struggles in ways that resist victimhood and instead embody resistance.

This paper underscores the importance of examining the history of hijras engaging in sex work through their own narratives. It calls for a broader understanding of sexuality and labour, dismantling the stigma associated with both. By weaving together history, media representation, and personal accounts, this paper reclaims the voices of Hijras as agents of social and cultural transformation, emphasizing the significance of deviance as a critical lens for understanding the intersection of sexuality, gender, and power in South Asia.

Rachel Hope Cleves (University of Victoria) What's Queer About Food History: Intersection between food and same-sex

Queer history is not always very queer. Take, for example, the field's taxonomic tendencies. As Kadji Amin pointed out in a 2023 *GLQ* essay, "taxonomy is a scientific method that was developed in and through its colonial, anti-Black, and pathologizing uses." Taxonomy's problems extend beyond its roots to its impacts. Dividing the past according to contemporary taxonomies (i.e. "gay men," "lesbians," and "trans women," etc.) runs the risk of naturalizing and reproducing ordered hierarchies at the cost of missing a messier, queerer, rendition of the past. But if we don't rely on contemporary taxonomies to determine the subjects of queer history, how can we know where to look and how to delimit our research focus?

In this paper I will explore how research into the intersections of food history and the history of sex can queer our understandings of the past. Dislodging modern sexuality as the sole optic through which to view the history of sex makes it possible to bring together people, behaviors, and desires that are often hived off

into separate subfields. As Elspeth Probyn has argued, “thinking sex through food” illuminates the “interrelation of various corporeal dimensions.” In my research, studying the intersection of food and sex brings together female sex work and sex between men, two practices that rubbed shoulders in the past far more extensively than they do in contemporary scholarship.

Centering the alimentary-sexual regime as the subject of study makes it possible to break from a predetermined taxonomic organization of the past. This paper will draw on the decade of research that I completed for my new monograph, *Lustful Appetites: An Intimate History of Good Food and Wicked Sex* (Polity 2024/2025).

- 1) Kadji Amin, "Taxonomically Queer? Sexology and New Queer, Trans, and Asexual Identities." *GLQ: A Journal of Lesbian and Gay Studies* 29, no. 1 (2023): 91-107.
- 2) Elspeth Probyn, "Beyond Food/Sex: Eating and an Ethics of Existence." *Theory, Culture & Society* 16, no. 2 (1999): 215-28.

Luyang Hu (Newcastle University): Archiving Queer Histories: Genderless Fashion and Visual Practices in Japan

The visual archives of East Asian genderless fashion, particularly through Japanese street photography and personal practices, offer untapped potential for reconceptualising how queer histories are documented and interpreted. Through self-styling and visual storytelling, personal practices construct participatory archives, enabling a dynamic reinterpretation of gender diversity across historical and cultural contexts. This paper contributes to queer historiography by positioning genderless fashion as a living archive—a medium that not only documents but also actively reconstructs the past through its aesthetic and cultural interventions. Through this lens, the paper examines the dynamic interplay between contemporary genderless fashion and historical traditions of gender fluidity in Japan. Furthermore, this research highlights how these practices enhance the visibility of East Asian queer identities while fostering a broader understanding of gender diversity across cultural contexts.

This research investigates how visual records from Japanese street photography and individual creative expressions constitute alternative historical documents that challenge traditional historiographical approaches to gender and queer studies. Drawing on publicly accessible archives visual records from publicly accessible archives, including Shoichi Aoki's *Fruits* street photography, independent visual practices by photographers like Yurie Nagashima, and self-photography within Harajuku culture, it demonstrates how genderless fashion in Japan provides a model for integrating contemporary practices into broader queer historiographical frameworks. Through systematic analysis of these visual materials, this study examines how genderless fashion functions as an archive of non-linear queer temporalities. By foregrounding personal creative expressions, this study highlights how everyday practices create nonlinear temporalities that integrate queer histories with lived experiences.

The theoretical framework combines Judith Butler's performativity theory with Michel de Certeau's concept of everyday practices, offering new analytical tools for understanding fashion's role in destabilising normative gender narratives. The methodology integrates semiotic analysis with critical visual analysis, focusing on elements such as clothing aesthetics, body language, and spatial representation. This approach extends current scholarly discussions by positioning fashion as both a cultural artefact and a medium of historical documentation. As a focal point in East Asia, Japanese genderless fashion exemplifies how regional cultural practices can challenge global historiographical approaches to gender and queer. This approach reveals how genderless fashion creates participatory archives that enable new interpretations of gender diversity in historical contexts.

Stream: Literature and the Arts: Art History, Stage and Performance

R Benedito Ferrão (College of William & Mary): The Forgotten Black Ocean: Trans(continental) Travel and Decolonial Queer Ecology in Mojisola Adebayo's Moj of the Antarctic

In *Moj of the Antarctic: An African Odyssey* (2007), playwright-performer Mojisola Adebayo employs the real-life story of Ellen Craft (1824-1900), an African American woman who escaped slavery by disguising herself as a white man. Moj's travels across continents coincide with the character's evolving gender identity, both evoking Craft's own trans-continental and trans-gender forays. As my presentation will discuss, Adebayo's play uses the geo-mythical Gondwanaland to reimagine geography without (historical and political) separation and without binaristic difference. The play asks its viewers to think of the tectonic shift that separated the continents as a metaphor for the divisive forces of colonization, capitalism, and racism.

By traveling across oceans and continents, Moj sutures these diverse locations as a Black person reversing and remembering histories of displacement. This allows for an intervention in travel studies by focusing on the journeys of a subaltern subject and also by using fugitivity to link multiple oceanic and continental regions. Moj's queerness brings into question the relationship of gender and exploration to nation, especially as a necessity in colonial enterprises that rely/relied upon difference as power. Simultaneously, the play harkens to the forgotten or subsumed journeys of Black travelers, raising questions about the historiographic lapses in travel studies.

However, the play does not simply function in the realm of the known. Even as it recalls an ecological as well as a colonial past for one set of land masses, the play speculates the future of Antarctica as a space of recursive environmental destruction and/or emancipatory possibility. The play's use of queerness offers a rethinking of personhood as it is delimited by national belonging; it queries the possibility of looking to the care of land as a transformative extension of self-making and as a practice of active decoloniality.

Fleur Renkema (Utrecht University): The Lesbus Tour: Lesbians Unlimited and Street Theater as Solidarity

Since the 1970s, activists have established multiple archives for women's and gay and lesbian history throughout the Netherlands. These archives are now consolidated into two main collections. While these archives contain records from the old archives that were located in cities throughout the Netherlands, most written Dutch gay and lesbian history is centered around the so-called *Randstad*, an area in the West of the Netherlands in which its four biggest cities (Amsterdam, the Hague, Rotterdam, Utrecht) are located.

The lack of local LGBTQI+ archives and the location of the existing archives in Amsterdam, helps to create a less multidimensional image of Dutch gay and lesbian history. In my research, I am foregrounding gay and lesbian activist groups that not only operated outside of the *Randstad* but outside of mainstream assimilationist gay and lesbian activism as well. While the COC, the largest and oldest gay and lesbian organization in the Netherlands, emphasized the sameness of homosexuality, other gay and lesbian groups emerged in the 1970s and 1980s that celebrated difference instead. These groups saw radical potential in homosexuality and lesbianism as a means to change the heteropatriarchal and capitalist order. They did not want to integrate into heterosexual norms but instead propagated ideas of utopia, matriarchy, free sexuality, and socialism. Following Emily Hobson (2016), I call this group the gay and lesbian left.

Endemic for these groups was their use of unconventional methods of activism, often rooted in cultural practices. Studying these cultural forms of activism provides knowledge of these groups that goes beyond ideology, the main focus of social scientists in studying social movements. As T.V. Reed argues in his book *The Art of Protest* (2019), “the very vagueness of ‘culture’ that has kept many social scientists from examining it seriously as a movement force is precisely one of its virtues when it serves to link activists together despite competing ideas” (384). Following this, Reed contends that art and culture within and coming out of movements can lead to a more profound understanding of the impact of social movements.

In this paper, through my focus on the lesbian group Lesbians Unlimited, I will attempt to queer Dutch gay and lesbian history in several ways. First, I will queer the process of archival research itself. Lesbians Unlimited is Groningen-based, a smaller city in the North of the Netherlands, and their archives are not preserved institutionally. Rather, I depend on oral history and access to personal archives, methodologies fostered by interpersonal relationships. Second, I will contest the current dominant idea of Dutch gay and lesbian liberation as a linear process in line with the progress of the COC by highlighting a group belonging to the gay and lesbian left, or gay and lesbian activists who combine sexual politics and socialism. And lastly, I foreground Lesbian Unlimited’s street theater tour Lesbus (1992) as my main research object. Following this, I argue that using art and culture as an inquiry into gay and lesbian history queers our understanding of historical methodologies.

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Nancy Bruseker (Independent): French transfeminine performers in the 1950s

This paper considers the implications of a book project investigating the international transmission of transfeminine identities from cabarets in France to countries around the world in the mid-Twentieth century. I came to this topic through research in queer venues around the world, research that led me to discover the regular appearance of the influence of these French performers in these venues. Through their tours, they shared knowledges and technologies of transition, what is now considered to be the hegemonic way of being trans.

Taking as examples transfeminine lives from Argentina and Japan, I examine the impact of the arrival of French transfeminine cabaret performers on the local populations. I consider the celebration in the performances of these French transfeminine people who were being honestly themselves and enabling that attitude in others, while also acknowledging the inherent recolonisation of those performances.

Getting this wrong can have grave consequences. As Bhatt (2024) notes, “we can trace a path from Western transmisogynistic fundamentalism to the legal, institutionalized Third-Sexing of all Indian trans people. That is the legacy of Western academia, of cultural anthropology, of a field playing at decolonialism proving to be an instrumental imperialist accomplice to India’s codification of degendering.” It is important to discuss the impact of the French cabarets in the same way we study other colonising activities. While there is not a one to one relationship with Blackness and transness, Bey argues “blackness and trans*-ness embitter the binaristic zero-one formulation that is ontology,”(2017, p.290) identifying the resonances between these two

positions. In the second half of the twentieth century, medicalization created a right (white) way to be trans. It created a marginalization of some trans identities, namely those which did not conform to the latest developments in medical transition, and its concomitant mental constructions.

Binaohan's (2014) work serves as a call to desimplify and remystify the cultural variation in trans identities, rather than focusing on the now-hegemonic white way of being trans, what Pasley (2022) identifies as the transnormative perspective.

Part of my effort at embracing a decolonial perspective is taking the various nations under investigation on their own terms. This means opening to the mariconas and travesti from Argentina as relevant identities for investigation, for example, or to compare the various transfeminine identities like dansho and gei boi and buru boi in Japan.

Considering the work of the above scholars alongside my own research allows me to examine the positionality of my work, and advances the aim of creating a decolonial queer transfeminine history. I would like to believe that what I am doing is tracing Bhatt's "crosscultural transsexual and transfeminist consciousness" which she labels "not imperialism." However, this is very much a work in progress, a work created under white supremacy, by a cis white queer European woman. The decolonial perspective is one to be earned and this paper is an attempt to do just that.

Kaisa Lassinaro (University of Jyväskylä): Tracing Trans Histories

The paper explores the intersection of art and research, interdisciplinarity and artistic methods in the diversification of history narration. The lead for this enquiry comes from the play *The Lovely Daughter Erika – Notes on a name (Ihana tytär Erika – huomioita nimestä)*. The play was presented at the archives of the Finnish Literature Society (*Suomalaisen kirjallisuuden seura*) in 2023–24. Written by dramaturg Emil Uttu and produced by their all-trans working group¹, the play is based on an archival note that reveals one particular historical narrative. It is artistic research that opens up local folk history and its archives to include trans pasts. The paper – via Uttu's play – asks questions around subjectivity, such as: How does the life experience of the researcher affect the research they are producing? What are the implications of norms, categorisation and assumed objectivity to histories that may be blind spots for the researcher? The play brings these histories to the surface by tracing one particular archival anecdote: *She was pleased when she was called Erika, but upset when referred to as Kustaa*, submitted to a Finnish folk history magazine in 1965. *The Lovely Daughter Erika* poetically picks apart the assumptions of objectivity in archival research and history narration, while revealing the violence behind the conventions (Hartman 2008). In the context of historical research, a particular gaze, personal experience and expertise offer an advantage position *in recognising people who are like us in the past* (Heyam 2022). The clues of minor histories sneak into the dominant narratives to be picked up by researchers with specificity and sensitivity. However, as queer historian Tuula Juvonen notes, this sensitivity should not be imagined as an innate quality only queer researchers possess: it is a matter of training – a skill that can be acquired, independent of one's sexuality or gender identification (Juvonen 2021, 75). Art and queer studies are areas receptive towards experimentation and new methods. When disciplinary boundaries get crossed, the research becomes more comprehensive and more *embodied*. The feminist critique on academic writing by Mona Livholts (2012), as well as María Elena Martínez's (2014) call for embodied methods in research are exemplified in the play. Following its lead, the paper considers the situated body of the researcher and its socio-material engagement, and the way artistic methods and interdisciplinarity can diversify knowledge-making.

1 Camille Auer, Ellen Aunio, Tari Doris, Mira Aurelia Eskelinen, Santi Garzón, Kid Kokko, Even Minn, Orlan Ohtonen, Kauri Sorvari, Tatu Nenonen, Ami Karvonen

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David S. Churchill (University of Manitoba): "Queer Paths and Queer Pasts: Museums, Uranian Afterlives, and Antinous"

In 1878, the art historian and homosexual emancipation author John Addington Symonds wrote to the British Museum curator Stuart Poole regarding Antinous -- the young lover of the Roman Emperor Hadrian. Replying, Poole told Symonds that "...it was very courageous even to ask questions" about Antinous. Poole's comments appear to be warning Symonds off further inquiries or at least reflect the anxiety a person rife with queer associations could illicit. Yet Antinous was not an anonymous or hidden figure during the late 19th century. Sculptures, busts, statutes, and cameos of Antinous were fixtures in museums and private collections throughout Europe through the 18th and 19th centuries. The British Museum's marble portrait of Antinous had been part of the Townley Collection, acquired by the British Museum in 1805, and as such, belonged to the foundational core holdings of the Museum. Today the marble portrait of Antinous as the god Dionysus is one of the 15 objects that make up the British Museum's LGBTQ+ self-guided trail *Desire, Love, and Identity*. Similarly, the Fitzwilliam Museum in Cambridge gives a bust Antinous as Dionysus pride of place as the starting point of the Museum's LGBTQ+ *Bridging Binaries* tour of its collection. Not to be left out, the Ashmolean Museum in Oxford made a bust of Antinous the centrepiece of a special exhibition *Antinous: A Boy Made God*. Antinous was central to the historical genealogies and aesthetic politics of homosexual emancipation authors such as Symonds and Karl Heinrich and writers such as Oscar Wilde. This paper will explore how contemporary museums embrace Antinous as a historic LGBTQ+ figure and reproduce homosexual emancipation era narratives of male beauty and Western Civilization, while also generating contemporaneous gay "love stories" while glossing over the histories of extraction and acquisition of ancient sculptures and artefacts or critically engaging the aesthetic politics of idealized male beauty in terms of racial pseudo-science.

Solo: Queer Strategies of the late twentieth century

Brell Wilson (Birkbeck College, University of London): Histories of transphobia in the borderlands of 'transgender': revisiting 'gender-fraud' prosecutions in the 1990s

In 1991, a teenager was charged in what the tabloid press called ‘one of the most bizarre [cases] ever heard by a British jury.’ The charge alleged that she had deceived two other teenagers into having sex by pretending to be a boy. Since 2012, a spate of similar so-called ‘gender-fraud’ prosecutions has continued in the UK. This paper returns to the 1991 trial, to trace one of transphobia’s histories as the case moved through the courts and into the tabloid press.

This paper first frames the exploration of transphobia in a historiographical challenge which I call the ‘borderlands of transgender,’ simultaneously a geographical, temporal, and classed location relative to the emergent ‘transgender’ politics of the 1990s. At the trial, there was no mention of trans identity, not by the defence, the prosecuting lawyers, or the prosecuting press. Trans practices as well as gay ones, perhaps even gay identities, blended in a discourse whose conditions of possibility were shaped by their borderland location. Through the idea of the ‘borderlands of transgender’ I question different modes of ‘belonging’ in trans history, as this case became part of 1990s trans masculine political consciousness.

The second part of this paper moves to trace how transphobia was articulated through the trial and its reception, through an idea of non-normative gender as harmful to others who might encounter it. In particular, I argue that non-normative gender was produced as the cause of two interlinked harms, a social one and a sexual one. These harms, I argue, were collapsed into each other in the phobic spectre of a monstrous trans presence even if it was unnamed.

My wider thesis explores the sexual politics of transphobia in the late twentieth century. This history is becoming increasingly important; from right-wing cries of ‘groomer’ to TERF diagnoses of ‘autogynephilia,’ the idea of trans people as sexually harmful is growing in political purchase. While these accusations mostly target trans women, this paper – like all British ‘gender fraud’ prosecutions – explores distinct phobic logics that have formed around trans *masculinities*.

Alex Ketchum (McGill University): Digital Queers and LGBTQ2S+ Archives: How the Information Activism of Queer Cyber Activists in the 1990s Brought the World Wide Web Revolution to the LGBTQ+ Revolution and Preserved Future Histories

With the launch of the World Wide Web in 1991 and its growing popularity in the early 1990s, queer community organizations felt the need to develop their own websites, discussion forums, and digital ecosystem. In the mid-1990s, cyber activist organizations such as Digital Queers sought to provide support for this process. They trained LGBTQ+ non-profit organizations to use the Internet and raised funds to provide hardware and software for them. At the same time, as non-profit queer organizations themselves, lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender, queer, and two spirit archives (LGBTQ2S+ archives) had to navigate the World Wide Web Revolution. Often founded as community archives, lacking significant material resources and relying on short staffing and volunteers, LGBTQ2S+ archives were among the community organizations to receive support from queer cyber activists in the form of hardware, software, and training on digital technologies. LGBTQ2S+ archives had to create websites, navigate the transition online, and decipher how to preserve digital born materials (materials that originate in digital form). While learning these new processes and technologies, these archives simultaneously preserved the histories of the queer cyber activists who assisted them. In fact, these archives contain some of the only remaining traces of this history of queer information activism and cyber activism. It is then due to the work of cyber activists providing support to LGBTQ2S+ archives that has made studying this history even possible; they assisted with the creation of the infrastructure needed to preserve these histories. Therefore, this paper reckons with the history of the organizations that enabled the preservation of queer cyber activist history and raises questions about the ongoing preservation of queer materials. In this way, LGBTQ2S+ archives are both subject and object, the documenter and the documented.

Danielle Carron (European University Institute): "Da war noch vieles möglich / anderes ist völlig zusammengebrochen": Queer Lives and Illiberal Futures after German 'Re'Unification

"We Germans are now the happiest *Volk* in the world," declared West Berlin mayor Walter Momper on November 9th, 1989, in reference to the opening of the East German border. The joy characterized by Momper was reinforced by the national and global circulation of now-famous images of crowds crying, laughing, drinking and embracing on top of the Berlin Wall. That same night, queer German contemporaries describe their apprehension as they visited the respective 'other' Berlin: Christina Karstädt reflects that she "had this sense of danger", Katharina Oguntoye describes it as a joyful and hysteric, yet "frightening moment" where she "felt foreign," and Nadja Schallenberg found that she "did not share this euphoria, and already had the feeling that something was wrong." In the Unification processes that followed, legislative and cultural shifts and the rise in anti-minority violence (the "Baseball Bat Years") made evident the limits of belonging in the modern German state, delineating those on the periphery from the celebratory *Volk*.

The proposed presentation will consider how queer perspectives disrupt linear progress or 'liberation' narratives in connection to German 'Re'Unification. The reflections of queer contemporaries, particularly those collected in recent projects, reveal simultaneous, complex emotional experiences with ostracization, belonging, community-building and loss after the fall of the Wall. While new networks and mobilities emerged, queer activists also describe the distortion of existing frameworks for living and organizing, the disruption of political momentum, and the growth of inter- and intra-communal conflicts within subcultures as racism and xenophobia became violently pronounced. Subjected to queer historical study, the liminality of 'Re'Unification underscores the ambiguity of identity categorizations and intersectionality, as in this context the national Other becomes located within and between the experiences of East Germans, migrants, racialized and queer people. Using oral interviews, memoirs, poetry and other personal sources, this presentation will investigate how this period made porous the boundaries between categories and communities, while also fixing nationalist and subcultural hierarchies that would permeate the illiberal German present.

1) Misc. Interviews, *"Friedliche Revolution"? Lesbisch-feministische Perspektiven auf 1989*, FFBIZ-Archiv.

2) *Nicht Die Ersten: Bewegungsgeschichten von Queers of Colour in Deutschland*, edited by Tarek Shukrallah (Berlin: Assoziation A, 2024), and *"Friedliche Revolution"? Lesbisch-feministische Perspektiven auf 1989*", FFBIZ-Archiv, 2019-2020.

Jesse van Amelsvoort and Bram Mellink (University of Amsterdam): Queering the Caring Society Paradoxes of Christian Democracy and HIV/AIDS in the Netherlands

Among the wide variety of topics encompassed by queer history, the history of HIV and AIDS in the 1980s and early 1990s may be one of the most challenging to queer properly. On the one hand, American academics (Rivers 2018) have taken the lead during the last decade in breaking up a narrative dominated by white, middle-class gay men, broadening the scope of the history of HIV and AIDS to include a wider variety of groups and to portray HIV/AIDS less exclusively as a gay disease. On the other hand, both in the United States and in Western Europe, gay men often played a leading role during the early stages of the HIV epidemic and were able to play this particular role partly as a result of their middle class status (Weston and Elizabeth 2022). Moreover, the role of these gay activists during the epidemic of the 1980s has served as a source of agency, highlighting that people affected directly by the HIV virus were more than victims alone.

This paper considers the lobby of middle-class gays and feminists to raise awareness of AIDS in the Netherlands throughout the 1980s. They did so in a political landscape dominated by Christian Democrats,

whose pleas for a ‘caring society’ simultaneously served a roll-back of state-provided welfare arrangements, as well as a roll-out of a neoconservative agenda of ‘family values’ (Mellink and Van Amelsvoort 2024). On the one hand, gay and feminist activism regarding HIV/AIDS contributed to a visibility of groups that did not fit in well with the image of the traditional family. On the other hand, the civil initiatives taken by gays and activists to self-organise in response to AIDS, rather than relying on the state, fitted hand-in-glove with the ‘caring society’ the Christian Democrats had envisioned.

In this paper, we trace the development of the influence of Christian democratic ideology on the self-management of the HIV epidemic among gays in the Netherlands – and vice versa – in the 1980s. We specifically zoom in on the circulation of notions of “care” in both policy, as well as activism. How did the Christian democratic appeal to “family values” (cf. Cooper 2017; Oudenampsen 2022) and caretaking entice AIDS activists in the 1980s? How did the emphasis on care and the family relate to ideas of queerness and queer identity? What is queer about the Dutch engagement with HIV/AIDS?

Jacob Preene (Örebro University): The History of Trans Activism in Scandinavia, 1964-2010

This presentation will present some of the results from my ongoing doctoral project in Gender Studies at Örebro University. The presentation will explore the transnational nature of the extensive print culture created by Scandinavian transfeminine activists. There exists a lot of research on some of the transfeminine and transvestite print cultures and (counter)publics in both Germany and the United States. This research focuses only on one country, despite the print culture crossing borders since at least the early 1960s. This conference paper will explore how Scandinavian transfeminine activists negotiated and argued for recognition through a transnational print culture. The empirical material consists of magazines and letters found in public and private archives.

The Scandinavian print culture was initially channeled through Swedish porn magazines and American transvestite magazines, but a broader print culture was created with the founding of the Swedish organization Klubb Transvestia in 1964 and the Foundation for Full Personality Expression – Northern Europe (FPE-NE) in 1966. These two organizations published magazines of their own, wrote pamphlets for public distribution, and rereleased articles from American journals.

I have divided the period into three phases: The first phase centers around the creation of a collective transvestite identity. A collective identity was negotiated by the different trans activists in both magazines and in letters. “The true transvestite” was contrasted with homosexual crossdressers and fetishists. The collective transvestite identity became important in the second phase, when it allowed the activists to negotiate with medical professionals for recognition. The second phase begins in the early 1970s, when a new group of progressive sexologists emerge in Denmark. The third phase begins around 1986, when the collective transvestite identity was renegotiated. The collective transvestite identity had been questioned periodically since the 1970s, but this renegotiation lasted longer and was divided between a group of mostly Danish activists, who wanted to include trans women and homosexual crossdressers and a group of mostly Swedish activists, who wanted to exclude them.

Solo: Quest, scraps, meta-verse - a roundtable conversation in three acts

Lina Mohageb , Oda-Kange Midtvåge Diallo, Nico Miskow Friborg, Maya Acharya

Welcome to this experimental roundtable that will be divided into three parts:

Act one: The Quest.

Join us as we venture out together to follow whispers, rumours and gossip to connect with friends from the past. We have all been searching for stories, movements, trouble makers, disruptors, and people up to no good that can inspire us and make us feel less alone. Together we will share this journey of unearthing traces of coalitional organising, challenging the categorisations and siloing of different anti-oppression struggles.

Act two: Scraps and things passed down

In act two we will do a live workshop format, putting together fragments, scraps, residue of materials found across time and space, merging our different practices. Images, sound, newspaper clippings, study materials, conversations, poems. Speculating on how these materials are connected, we will explore how we are connected to our friends of the past. We will practice a form of critical fabulation (Hartman, 2008) or movement against narrative consistency (Olufemi, 2021), as we unearth what has been passed on to us, and imagine what we are passing on to those who come after us.

Act three: Reflecting in the meta-verse

Rounding up, and rounding out. What has drawn us into archives, the past, and the passing on of knowledge? How do different formats, forms, materials make us feel? What does it mean to unearth, cut, make opaque and open-ended, residues from past organising contexts and fit these into an academic format? And should we? What does it mean in terms of who can and cannot access and make use of the knowledge? And is there a way to keep the opacity in these processes (Acharya 2024)? Does archiving necessarily entail documenting events, people, and movements so they can be found materially or can such practices take on more fleeting forms that allow for shifts as we share and engage in new ways?

We know that people have been keeping each other alive against state abandonment although this knowledge is not present or has not been captured in traditional archives. Perhaps this quest in which we search for the unknown will bring us closer to these people?

The third act will take shape as a conversation between the four of us, where we will explore these questions collectively.

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