

## Abstracts

### **Christoffer Koch Andersen, 'A Trans History of Denmark: From Administrative Violence to Automated Erasure'**

Denmark's status as 'Europe's Digital Champion' has promised 'improvement' of our lives, but what happens when this promise is only for the cisgendered few? How can we unveil the ways the Danish state has historically controlled trans identities and how the binary violence encoded into digital systems automates the legacy of administrative state violence and furthers trans erasure? In this paper, I trace a Trans History of Denmark to (1) illuminate how the Danish state has discriminated against trans lives and radicalises this violence through digital systems to (2) propose ethical future directions for trans history and technology in Denmark.

### **Sam Bailey, 'Women and the Printing of Male-Male Pornography in Eighteenth-Century England'**

Literary depictions of sex between men were not uncommon in eighteenth-century print culture. Various genres drew attention, in sometimes explicit terms, to various forms of what we might read as queer desire. I locate gay porn in the wider print culture through attentiveness to the circumstances of the production of two texts: *Love Letters* [...] (1723) and *A Spy on Mother Midnight* (1748–9), examples of illicit homosexual smut printed by two successful women in collaboration with their husbands. Provoking a conversation between analytic bibliography and queer history, I consider the motivations for printing works on which we draw for eighteenth-century queer studies.

### **Giselle Bernard, 'Transgressing Gendered, Sexual and Orientalist Boundaries in *Urania* (1916–1940): Reading a British Queer and Feminist Periodical in its Imperial Context'**

Scholarship on queer women in the early 20th century has largely focused on European settings and only tentatively explored the global context in which understandings of same-gender desire and non-binary gender identities emerged. Yet studying *Urania*, it becomes clear that aspirations to overcome binary gender assignments and heteronormativity emerged through networks that stretched from London to South and East Asia. Following the new, global, direction of queer and trans histories, this paper will explore how Orientalist tropes were both reproduced and challenged in *Urania*, as subjects othered for their queerness in colonial metropolises encountered actors othered on racist grounds.

### **Jo Brydon, 'Lessons from Percy Grainger Towards a Musicological Trans History'**

While much scholarship on Percy Grainger exists, very little takes seriously the claims they made in their writing about inhabiting a gendered position neither wholly male nor wholly female. With Grainger being one of the early twentieth century's most influential composers, taking their letters at face value helps to reveal several of the techniques that they used in their musical work to make comments about gender. This paper explores the ways Grainger subverted the masculine-coded and feminine-coded musical devices described by Edwardian musicological frameworks and proposes new methods for researching trans histories of London through the lens of musicological analysis.

**Emily Cousens, Birckbeck, 'Putting the femme in feminist: The male lesbian and sex-positive trans lesbian feminism in the 1970s'**

At best, from the vantage point of the present, the identity of the "male lesbian" recalls a humorous plotline from an early season of *The L-Word* (remember Lisa?) However, rewind just fifty years, and the male lesbian was a thriving transfemme subcultural identity. Against a slideshow that includes original archival images, this paper illuminates the links between 1970s radical feminist and trans feminine subcultures that developed from the category of male lesbian. Highlighting the intellectual, ideological and political significance of the male lesbian identity formation offers a horizon for lesbian feminism as a sex-positive, trans inclusive, radical and visionary politics.

**Ellen Durban, 'Lesbians and the Law: Restricting Lesbian Motherhood Outside the Nuclear Family in England and Wales: 1970-1999'**

Economic and social pressures for women to marry drove lesbians into marriage. Financially dependent on their husbands and invisible in society, married lesbians did not threaten the "family". In the 1970s, the breakdown of controls to keep women dependent on men within marriage allowed lesbians to challenge traditional forms of the family. Lesbian mothers became visible either by fighting for custody of their children with their ex-husbands, conceiving children by artificial insemination, or adopting and fostering children. Alarmed by lesbians raising children outside the heteronormative nuclear family, judges and parliamentarians attempted to restrict lesbian parenting.

**Rachel Dutaud, *Obscene and Unnatural: Responses to British Censorship of Queer Literature, 1928-2024***

This presentation examines several instances of community responses to the censorship of queer literature (Radclyffe Hall's *The Well of Loneliness*, *Operation Tiger*, and *Section 28*), situating them within the context of current calls for the banning of queer books in the UK. I argue that archives are a vital resource for community building and activism. Queer archives, as community spaces, provide us with a toolkit of tactics that have been utilized with great success in the past and which may be replicated in the future. This presentation draws upon archival materials and queer history to demonstrate this perspective.

**Srija Duca, 'Ventures in the East: The initial European interactions with the world of the eunuchs, concubines and the beloveds'**

The Early Modern period was a period of multiple interactions between the Europeans and the Indians, especially Mughals, leading to a wide body of travel literature. This paper aims to look at this travel literature to understand the perceptions of the Europeans about non-conventional gender relationships and identities of the Aame in India. It aims to look at how their own societal norms and their interactions with the other parts of the world shaped this understanding. It also aims to use this analysis to conduct a comparative study of the various viewpoints on non-conventional gender relationships and identities within Early Modern Europe.

**Ruby Clara Ellis, 'Two good illas sitting in the tree': Queer playfulness in the letters of Olive Lloyd-Baker and Hedwig Schmidl, 1939-1964**

Between 1939 and 1964 Olive Lloyd-Baker, a member of Gloucestershire's landed gentry, and Hedwig Schmidl, a Jewish refugee from Nazi-occupied Vienna, exchanged hundreds

of letters, many of which have recently been rediscovered in the attic of their home, Hardwicke Court. Alongside giving an insight into the everyday occurrences of their shared life, the letters show how the couple used playfulness to explore their relationship and their own queerness. In the comfort and safety provided by the invented personas of the 'illas', Olive and Hedwig could thematise the age gap between them, trans gender, and express physical intimacy and affection.

### **Charles Gough, 'Behold the dawn has yet to come': Queer Eschatology and Futurity in The Diary of George Ives**

In the opening entry of his diary, George Cecil Ives – poet, criminologist, and early campaigner for homosexual law reform – writes: 'How we look onward; always hoping for the morrow...'. A colossal autobiographical project commenced in 1886 and eventually amassing 122 total volumes, Ives's unpublished diary documents an enduring investment in the emancipatory potential of the future as a means of conceptualising queer selfhood and community. Writing about homosexuality almost exclusively in eschatological terms, Ives imagines a queer Heaven on Earth in which men such as himself are liberated under the 'reign of Love'. Interrogating Ives's conception of homosexuality as contingent on this imagined future, I consider how thinking about queerness through ends and new beginnings liberates for Ives – and, indeed, for scholars of queer studies – a conceptual space for reinventing the cultural existence of queer subjects.

### **Ciara Hervas, 'Surrealism and Sexology: Photographing Queer Embodiment and Desire in Interwar Paris and Berlin'**

This paper examines how sexology and the artistic avant-garde in interwar Paris and Berlin used photography to navigate shifting understandings of sexual difference and articulate new modes of visualising sex, gender, and desire. Through a queer curatorial approach, this paper weaves together the parallel photographic archives of the German sexologist Magnus Hirschfeld (1868–1935) and French surrealist Claude Cahun (1894–1954). I attend to Hirschfeld and Cahun's shared use of modernist techniques such as photomontage in their reconceptualisations of the sexed and gendered body, and explore how Cahun's fluid photographic self-portraits engaged with Hirschfeld's formulation of sexual intermediacy while challenging its bioessentialism.

### **Klara Ismail, 'Queer Histories of Censorship Evasion in Richard Bruce Nugent's "Smoke, Lilies, and Jade"'**

This paper proposes that the use of ellipses in Richard Bruce Nugent's "Smoke, Lilies, and Jade" are intentionally used as signifiers of same-sex erotics in order to evade and undermine obscenity laws of the period. As the first homoerotic story published by an African-American, Nugent's work has been praised for its depictions of same-sex male passion. However, no obscene language features in the text. Censorship laws of the period imagined obscenity in writing as a primarily lexical phenomenon, and thus the significance of non-lexical modes of expression, like punctuation, should not be overlooked in discussions of censorship histories.

### **Kamil Karczewski, 'A Forgotten Baltic Wave? A New History of the Decriminalisation of Homosexuality in Europe'**

This paper challenges the dominating narrative within queer history writing that positions Weimar Germany as the epicentre of homosexual legal emancipation during the early twentieth century. By examining the decriminalization of same-sex acts in four Baltic Sea countries— Poland (1932), Denmark (1933), Estonia (1934/5), and Sweden (1944)—through a transnational and comparative lens, it seeks to uncover potential parallels or interconnections among these events. Could a collective examination of these events change our understanding of queer history in twentieth-century Europe? This paper aims not only to illuminate overlooked transnational links but also to reassess the broader narrative of queer emancipation across the continent.

**Rian Kearney,**

Photo elicitation is a tool steadily employed in oral historical research. However, with photographs of historical LGBTQ+ venues lacking or buried in personal archives, histories are rendered unelicited. Working with those who used Birmingham's past LGBTQ+ venues, this research employs participatory drawing to coproduce a visual archive of now-demolished venues from the 1960s to the 1980s. I argue that spatial drawings allow interviewees to contribute not-yet-recorded personal and collective experiences. By reworking a formal tool of architectural communication, these drawings and interviews trace a multi-layered history of venues and how they are used and remembered in shared but conflicting ways.

**Sue Lemos, 'Becoming Visible' in 1980s Britain: 'Blacklesbians', 'Blackgays', Zami, and what 'the ancestors...[could not]...box up neatly'**

Community narratives have depicted the 1980s as the rise of the 'first out Black lesbian and gay generation' in Britain. Queer and trans Black people and people of colour formed groups, kinships, erotic relationships, defined themselves, partied and resisted in Thatcherite 'post-colonial' Britain. This paper conceptualises visibility as an ambivalent diasporic process. 'Blacklesbian' and 'Blackgay' elided 'political Blackness' with lesbian and gay liberation. Ethnic specific terms, such as Zami, invoked a transnational and anti-imperialist politics of sexuality and gender. Visibility did not occur 'neatly' or separately from community organising or liberatory futures.

**Soumyaseema Mandal, "'Let all the Women Come": Historicising Queer Sexualities of Working-Class Women in Interwar Britain'**

This paper investigates the much-doubted existence of queer working-class women in interwar Britain, often associated with the emergence of a middle-to upper-class modern lesbian identity. Alongside queer theory, I combine Phillip Harper's queer analytic of 'speculative rumination' that values 'guesswork and conjecture' as credible evidence with Saidiya Hartman's 'critical fabulation' that combines such conjectures with archival research to negotiate the limitations gnawing the extant records, particularly those on working-class queer women. I wish to locate these queer desires in three ways—through acts of gendercrossing, using 'spaces of sociability and sexual encounter' and by speculating queer presence in places of 'uncontrollable multiplicity.'

**Victoria Mangan, 'Jennie June's Transition: On Trans Literary History'**

In this paper I discuss Jennie June's *Autobiography of an Androgyne*, potentially the earliest trans autobiography in English, and what it means to describe it as such. Although the *Autobiography* has been described as an important document of 'early

twentieth century trans feminine life', the text itself is resistant to such simple inclusion. In particular, I explore how transition assumes such importance in existing frameworks of trans writing and how June's life, which was instead marked by crossing and re-crossing of gender lines, challenges these paradigms, as well as how her writing engages with historical frameworks of gender diversity.

**Juan Pedro Navarro Martinez, 'Not just love: Views on sexual violence in sodomy trials in Early Modern Spain (17th–18th Centuries)'**

Sexual violence (physical and psychological) is nowadays observed as a transhistorical element. Sexual acts that can be categorised as forced, violent and/or violent seem to be traced back to all historical periods. However, there is a tendency to universalise this experience, building on it a linear genealogy that obscures the differentiating nuances of social and gender dynamics ascribed to specific cultures and historical times. The main objective of this proposal is the understanding of the forms of sexual violence that are articulated around sexual relations of sodomy in early modern Spain, and which in turn allow us to apply new perspectives of analysis that overcome the traditional conception of sexual violence as an element only applicable to monogamous and normative relationships.

**Gibson Ncube, 'Hidden histories, painted pride: Desire Marea's queer Zulu soldiers'**

Grand national historical narratives rarely consider queer lived realities. Queer experiences are often elided and marginalised from national archives. But what happens when history is reimagined by centring queerness? This paper considers the paintings of South African musician and visual artist Desire Marea. In their series of paintings entitled "The Baddies of Isandlwana", Marea reimagines the 1879 Battle of Isandlwana, the first major encounter in the Anglo-Zulu War. This series of acrylic on canvas paintings imagines the lives of queer Zulu soldiers. This paper draws on James Coleman's conceptualisation of "historically rooted speculative" creative works which centre "alternative rhetorics of queer futurity". Marea's paintings challenge a historical event which is ordinarily framed in terms of violence and (hyper)masculinity by offering a counter-narrative that celebrates the presence and contributions of queer individuals in a significant moment in South African history. Through their art, Marea not only reclaims space for marginalized identities but also invites viewers to consider new possibilities for understanding and interpreting the past.

**Malcolm Noble, 'Queer critical bibliography and queer kinship'**

Over the last decade, the emergence of critical bibliography has seen various critical studies applied to rethink bibliography as a field, its foundations, its assumptions, and crucially, whose interests these serve. There has been important work in Black, Indigenous, and feminist bibliographies, but queer bibliography has been slower to emerge. Given the close relationship between textuality and sexuality, the importance of print in mediating and sustaining queer identities and communities, this is curious. This paper introduces queer critical bibliography, ideas of affect, touch, and emotional labour, and how it can help recover and facilitate queer kinship.

**Raphaella Van Oers,** This paper analyzes coverage of the HIV/AIDS epidemic in the *South Wales Echo* in the 1980s and early 1990s. Scholarship on the epidemic in

Britain, although critical of the press' stigmatizing and homophobic attitudes, has neglected to thoroughly examine nuances in coverage, or to consider regional variations (Wales in particular has been overlooked in British HIV/AIDS histories). This paper addresses these historical oversights by critically analyzing coverage in the *South Wales Echo*, and by drawing on theories from media studies, to examine discourses surrounding HIV/AIDS and gay men in Wales, and to consider these in relation to the British national press.

**Amy Prescott, 'I was born a criminal': Tracing the journey of LGBTQ+ individuals across their life-course**

Our £1.2m ESRC-funded research project, Socially Inclusive Ageing across the Life-course, is investigating the social health (ability to form meaningful relationships with others) of older adults from minority groups, including the LGBTQ+ community, employing Ameline interviews as the methodological approach. These interviews serve as a reflective lens on LGBTQ+ history, covering topics like decriminalisation, unequal age of consent, HIV/AIDS crisis, marriage/civil partnerships, 'coming out,' parenting, and ongoing discrimination. This presentation delves into these themes, alongside uplifting narratives highlighting the resilience of today's ageing LGBTQ+ generation. Our research emphasises that many older LGBTQ+ individuals lead happy, fulfilling lives, challenging stereotypes about both ageing and LGBTQ+ experiences.

**Xavier Reader, 'The Queer South: Slavery and the regulation of sex in antebellum and early postbellum America'**

This paper explores the experiences of enslaved and formerly enslaved queer individuals, and their navigations of attempts at the regulation of sex in the antebellum and early postbellum South. I highlight the fragmentary evidence of queer presence that surface in a range of archival sources, drawing from medical journals, newspapers, court records and plantation manuscript materials, to suggest that Black queer bodies, particularly transfeminine bodies, were disproportionately subject to surveillance, examination, and regulation. In doing so, I aim to connect these life histories to a longer genealogy of the scrutinisation and disciplining of the lives of transfeminine people of colour.

**Sandro Weilenmann, 'Collaboration x community: Queer and trans heritage making in transition'**

Artistic-academic tandems have surged as an increasingly popular model in contemporary art spaces. Against the backdrop of institutions seeking to build wider support for equality and social justice, collaborative practices have created a novel visibility for trans and queer art and heritage making. Highlighting three recent instances in museums in France, Germany, and the UK, this paper discusses how the success of this hybrid model has to be critically weighted against concerns over sustainability, elitism, and superficiality. Is the collaborative trend simply an expression of a transitory stage, while many senior curators lack fluency in the highly active field of queer and trans discourses? Or is the exploration of collaboration as an undoing of established structures rather a defining feature of trans and queer cultural production, which have long been excluded from archives and exhibitions?

**Charles West, 'Sebas<an: Saint and Sex Icon'**

Saint Sebastian is a queer icon. From being the topic of Derek Jarman's 1976 Latin—language pornographic film to being idealised by turn-of-the-century aesthetes such as Oscar Wilde, he has been the object of the gay-male gaze for generations. His hagiography, however, does not give us any clues to his physical appearance and anything about his sexuality is conjecture. How, then, did a 3rd century martyr become a gay icon? This paper give an overview of Sebastian's changing role, and the physical changes that went with it, across the centuries, explaining how he came to be what we know today.

**Brell Wilson-Morris, 'Rethinking the sexual boundaries of 1970s American crossdresser culture: *Fantasia Fair* 1975–79'**

Founded in 1975 as a vacation for crossdressers, *Fantasia Fair* became America's longest-running trans event. While the scholarship on mid-century crossdressers often portrays a subculture of rigid gender roles and sexual norms, this paper argues that outside the periodicals that dominate this scholarship we glimpse a far messier world. Through the Fair's early organizational documents (1975–79), this paper explores its navigation of other faces of 1970s transvestite life: transvestism as eroticism, and sex work. These negotiations, it argues, reveal both a more sexually liberal transvestite subculture and the importance of racialised and classed 'othered' figures underpinning it.

**Baylee Woodley, "Pleasers and Parchment: Feeling Femme in the Archive"**

This paper is a self-reflexive exploration of femme feeling as an approach to queer archival work. Bringing femme theory into art history, it asks what femme does as an embodied form of radical knowledge-making rather than seeking to locate (and limit) what femme is as an identity. Turning to manuscript illuminations from late medieval England, it first introduces medieval femininities that queer modern expectations and disrupt narratives of linear progress. It then reflects on the co-constitutive relationship between my embodied experiences of performing queer femininities in drag and the femme feelings central to my archival encounters with these manuscripts.

**Carlisle Yingst, 'Miscellaneous Gender: Trans Bibliography and *The Life of Mary Ann Talbot*'**

This paper brings together bibliographical methods and work in queer/trans history by exploring the initial publication of *The Life of Mary Ann Talbot, in the Name of John Taylor* (1809). Talbot/Taylor's *Life* has long been important for queer histories, yet such histories often overlook the significance of its earliest appearance as part of an 1804 periodical miscellany. Reading Talbot/Taylor's *Life* alongside recent work on the miscellany as a form for classifying knowledge, I explore how this form's organizing structures contributed to early conceptions of Talbot/Taylor's gender—thus offering a case study in how work in bibliography can more broadly contribute to recovering gender-variant histories.