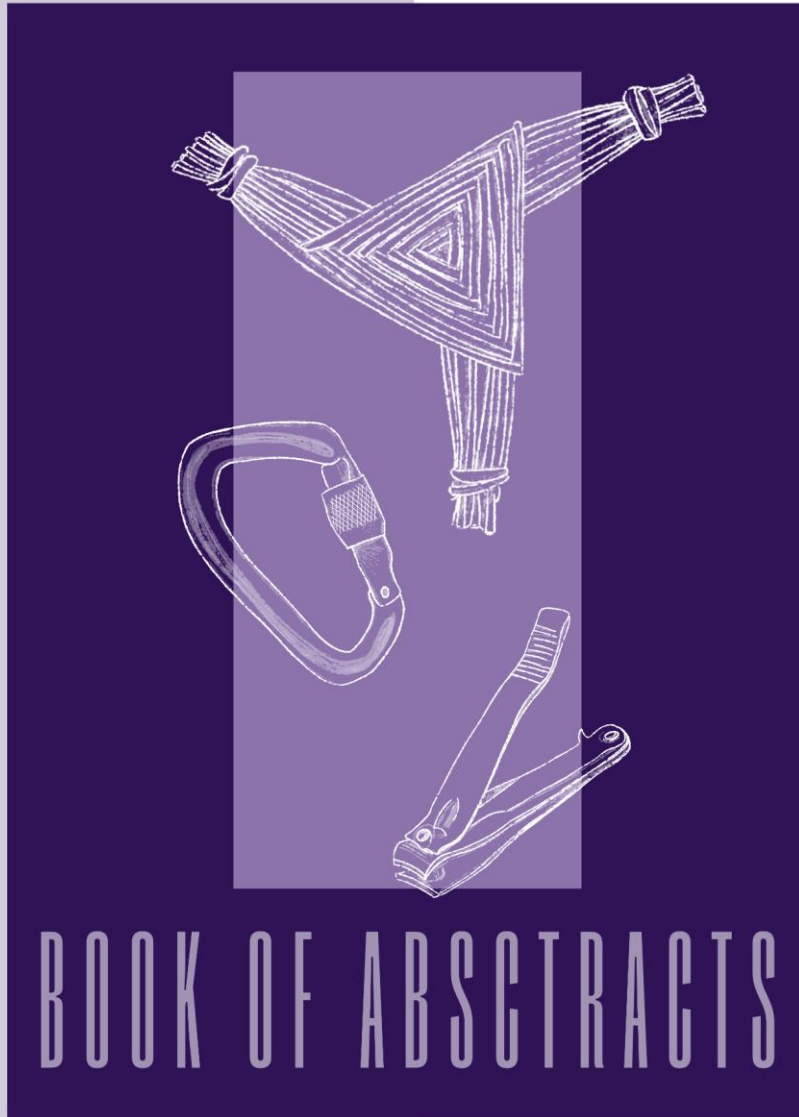


15th – 17th May
CORK, Ireland



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FRIDAY 15 MAY

Keynote

Aoife Neary, Lecturer in Educaiton, University College Cork,

Title:

Daring to be Ordinary: LGBTQ+ Lives in Primary Schools

Bio:

Aoife Neary (BSc, MA, PhD) is Lecturer in the School of Education, University College Cork (UCC). She joined UCC in 2024, following ten years in the School of Education, University of Limerick, including as Senior Lecturer in Sociology of Education and Associate Dean Equality, Diversity and Inclusion. Her research primarily explores LGBTQ+ lives in education contexts. Her current research, *CLEAR: Children's LGBTQ+ Equality and Rights* is funded by the Ombudsman for Children Office and is in partnership with Belong To LGBTQ Youth Ireland. In 2025, she was appointed as Associate Editor of the journal *Sex Education: Sexuality, Society and Learning*. She has contributed to national curriculum development as a member of two National Council for Curriculum and Assessment (NCCA) development groups, and since 2014 she has been leading and teaching teacher education modules that explore issues of social justice from a socio-cultural perspective.

Panel 1 – Aesthetic Representations: Transgressions, Difficulties & Subterfuge

The Virgin's Transgressions: The Sapphic-Marian Iconography of the Black Madonna of Częstochowa

Aleksandra Gajowy

University College Dublin

Abstract

In this paper, I propose lesbian readings of the figures of the Black Madonna and the Virgin Mary, venerated in Polish Catholicism. The Black Madonna of Częstochowa especially, as a figure incorporated into Haitian voodoo practices since the early nineteenth century, presents an extremely complex entanglement of the narratives of race, desire, and spirituality. I examine her significance to Polish lesbians, but





subsequently complicate it through a reading of decolonial scholarship between “Second World” territories and their entanglements in the context of postcolonial theory in Central and Eastern Europe. I then offer different models for lesbian veneration of the Virgin focusing on the clitoral libidinal economies which bring together feminine archetypes of the Virgin and Sappho. This enables a reading of lesbian motherhoods which have nothing to do with biological reproduction or children, and different ways of claiming the Virgin Mary through lesbian readings in Poland. I put forth lesbian readings of the Virgin Mary as a possibility of queer mothering which enables affective, erotic, desiring friendships and relationships and animates lesbian, queer, and trans affects of care and healing, as well as self-knowledge, also in erotic and romantic contexts as possible both amongst friends and lovers.

Biography

Aleksandra Gajowy is Assistant Professor in Modern and Contemporary Art at University College Dublin. She holds a PhD (2020) from Newcastle University (UK), which focused on body and queerness in Polish art since the 1970s. Her ongoing research focuses on queerness and lesbianism in Polish visual cultures since the nineteenth century, Central and Eastern European lesbian studies, and queer Jewishness in Poland. Her monograph on lesbian art from Poland is forthcoming with Manchester University Press. She is editing a special issue of *The Journal of Lesbian Studies* on Central and Eastern European lesbian studies, and serves on the editorial board of *The Journal of Lesbian Studies* and the newly founded *SQS: Slavic Queer Studies Journal*. Her writing appeared in journals such as *Third Text*, *Oxford Art Journal*, *Art History*, and *Art Margins*.

WRAP, CONTAIN, GATHER: Lesbian Presence in Harmony Hammond’s Late-1970s Wrapped Sculptures

Amy Krimm
The Courtauld Institute of Art

Abstract

Addressing the theme of lesbian life in art, my individual paper examines American lesbian artist Harmony Hammond’s wrapped sculptures (1977–1984) as distinctly lesbian works. Created in New York during a time of intense political and social reckoning, these sculptures are





contextualized amongst second-wave feminism, queer subjectivity, and the politics of abstraction. Hammond's lesbian consciousness informs and is inseparable from her work. In wrapping recycled rags around wooden armatures, Hammond builds a lesbian aesthetic language of looping repetition, bodily sensation, and collective memory. Her wrapped sculptures resist identification, instead existing comfortably in the messy and unruly in-between. This paper argues that Hammond uses process, aesthetic form, and physicality to conjure a visceral lesbian subjectivity. I will define three key terms in my presentation: wrap, contain, and gather. Extracted as essential elements of Hammond's sculptural practice, these terms become the structural and theoretical scaffolding of my argument. "Wrap" explores how the process of coiling, layering, and touching builds a nonlinear temporality that is grounded in sensation. Framing abstraction as a subversive political tool, "Contain" considers how Hammond's work holds and protects lesbian identity. Finally, "Gather" examines how the artist builds a spatial and emotional lesbian archive by assembling material, memory, and meaning. I propose a theory of gathering as something rooted in the practice of sewing: the act of gathering punctures and reshapes normative existence, building folds, volume and dimension from itself. Together, my framework of wrap, contain, gather offers interpretive structure for understanding Hammond's work, and work by other lesbian artists, not just as visual abstraction, but as lesbian and feminist practice.

Biography

Amy Krimm is an artist and art historian who currently lives and works in London. With an MA in History of Art from The Courtauld with a specialization in contemporary feminist and queer art practices, their visual art and research practices center ideas of home, embodiment, and ambiguity. As a Marshall Scholar in the UK, Amy studied neuroaesthetics alongside art history and now works in an art institution in London. She fills her days by weaving, sun printing, gardening, writing, and musing the infinite and invisible strings connecting lesbian lives.

Gentleman Jack and Lesbian Representation in Ballet

Clare Croft

University of Michigan





Abstract

Ballet is an art form that has been particularly challenging for lesbian representation. In ballet, women are usually asked to convey only the most idealized forms of femininity—usually white, usually heterosexual, and always skinny. And roles that could perhaps be categorized as masculine women are generally performed by cis men (and are almost always villains). This extreme commitment to narrow representations of the category of “woman” is only heightened in classical, narrative ballet. Ballet’s gender landscape makes Leeds-based Northern Ballet’s new production of *Gentleman Jack*—a ballet inspired by the life of Yorkshire-born, Regency-era lesbian Anne Lister—an unprecedented feat in the ballet world. In this presentation, the *Gentleman Jack* ballet’s dramaturg shares details and rehearsal footage of the work’s creation and production just days before the ballet’s London premiere.

Biography

Clare Croft is a writer, dance historian and theorist, dramaturg, and curator. She serves as dramaturg for Northern Ballet’s *Gentleman Jack*, choreographed by Annabelle Lopez Ochoa and currently touring the UK. Croft is Professor of American Culture at the University of Michigan and author of *Jill Johnston in Motion: Dance, Writing, and Lesbian Life*. She is editor of *The Essential Jill Johnston Reader* (Duke University Press, 2024) and *Queer Dance: Meanings and Makings* (Oxford University Press, 2017; second edition forthcoming 2026). Her dance criticism has appeared in *The Washington Post* and *The Brooklyn Rail*.

Panel 2 – Resistance in Times of Violence

Who Wins?: Productive Divisions in ‘Anti-Gender’ Times

Kath Browne

University College Dublin

Abstract

Divisions around gender and sexualities drive political agendas and affect people’s lives. This paper brings together two seemingly incompatible studies to explore the affects and implications of these divisions. RESIST explores anti-gender mobilisations and resistances to these, and Beyond Opposition contends that in exploring heteroactivisms, including anti-gender, we need to consider social





polarisations including those who are opposed to, or have concerns about, socio-legal changes including same sex marriage, gender recognition and abortion. Both consider the implications of what is extensively studied through social movements, (inter-)state actions and the media, through a different lens. The focus of these projects is on people's lives and their everyday spatialities. This not only offers a complimentary analysis of what can be seen when examining discursive and material political actions, it also asks for different conceptual frames. Namely questioning the oppositional binaries that are (at times necessarily) (re)formed. Exploring key findings across these two studies, I create new conceptual and practical insights into contemporary gender and sexuality landscapes. This creates a different perspectives to 'listening' to 'both sides' in ways that presume they are equal. Instead in develop new theorisations I refute the equivalence and lack of power analyses that these 'solutions' promote. To do this I cover 3 key areas that emerge across these studies:

1. Controversy is created and reproduces people's lives through division
2. There are effects to anti-gender
3. Resistances

I use these to contend that the creation of controversies are core to driving divisions through oppositional binaries that negatively affect all sides in differential ways. These in turn drive resistances that reiterate the binaries and reiterate and reinforce divisions. The productiveness of divisions then needs to be critically conceptualised, beyond 'winning the argument'.

Biography

Kath Browne is a professor in Human Geographies with a specialism in Sexualities and Genders. Her research focuses on social justice, inequalities and polarisations. She has explored how LGBTQ lives can be ameliorated, including through *Liveable Lives* (with Niharika Banerjea). She has explored opposition to sexual and gender equalities through the concept of heteroactivism (with Catherine Jean Nash). She current works on the Beyond Opposition research and is the Project Coordinator of the RESIST research.





Still Resisting: Queer and Feminist Challenges to Autocracy in the US

Sally O'Driscoll

Resisting Project 2025

Abstract

At the 2024 Lesbian Lives conference, I presented a video detailing what Project 2025 would mean for lesbian and queer lives in the United States if Trump were elected. Now this dystopian vision has become reality: the words DEI, LGBTQ+, women, Critical Race Theory, and gender are being deleted from all federal websites; the president issued an executive order saying that there are officially only two sexes; the administration is trying to take control of any university programs it considers to be "gender ideology."

None of this is a surprise: all these actions were mapped out in the Project 2025 Mandate for Leadership. The agenda is unfolding as planned.

The question is: what are we doing about it?

The queer/lesbian-run organization I work with, Resisting Project 2025, focuses on queer resistance and gender. On our website and Substack we offer ongoing analysis of the administration's actions and focus on successful strategies of queer resistance. We also link what is happening in the US to other authoritarian regimes, such as those in Argentina and Hungary. Around the world, rising authoritarian governments pick gender, sexuality, and trans issues as early targets, and their propaganda and policies are eerily similar.

My proposed presentation combines short video clips of street protests and an analysis of queer resistance in the US: strategies, successes, and shortcomings. It outlines the connections between resistance in the US and activism in other authoritarian regimes. Queers of all stripes have been on the forefront of this battle: what we do is a model for grassroots anti-authoritarian activists.

Biography

Sally O'Driscoll is a retired professor of English and Women's, Gender & Sexuality Studies at Fairfield University, USA. Her research has focused on English and French women writers of the eighteenth century, queer popular culture in eighteenth-century England, and contemporary queer identity. She is currently an activist with the NYC-based organization Resisting Project 2025.





Protecting Women and Lesbians? Sex/ual Exceptionalism and Weaponisations of Accusations of Sexual Violence

S. Lamble Birkbeck, University of London

Alyosxa Tudor

SOAS University of London

Abstract

This paper examines how the weaponisation of accusations of sexual violence is mobilised to accelerate right-wing, racist, and anti-trans politics. We argue that accusations of sexual violence are increasingly deployed to fracture movements for radical social transformation, depicting for example immigration and trans existence as a threat to 'women's safety'.

Puar's (2008) notion of 'sexual exceptionalism' shows how US nationalism and empire position sexuality as a marker of freedom, normalcy, and justification for wars and atrocities. 'Sex exceptionalism' has also been used to grasp how the sexual is constructed as an exceptional and more risky site of human behaviour and cultural expression, requiring exceptional practices of regulation, representation, restriction, and repression. We bring these strands together under the term 'sex/ual exceptionalism' to signal the need to hold these dimensions in tension.

While we agree with critical calls to reject the logics of sex/ual exceptionalism, we argue that we cannot escape its effects. It shapes gendered and sexual subjectivation and embeds itself in nationalist and racial bordering, not only at physical borders but also in psychic formations of belonging, even among those who disavow nationalism or racism. We argue that sex/ual exceptionalism works by stabilising gender (and not sex!) through its relentless discursive and representational power. It produces hierarchies of harm and reinforces people constructed as women and girls as inherently vulnerable, trapping survivors in narratives of permanent damage. Since we cannot opt out of sex/ual exceptionalism, we must ask how to disrupt its toxic, all-encompassing reach and loosen its grip on how we imagine gender, sexuality, and belonging. This is especially urgent for contemporary lesbian studies, where accusations of violence are often weaponised in the name of 'protecting' lesbians from trans existence, fracturing solidarities that are crucial for resisting right-wing mobilisation.





Biography

S. Lamble is Professor of Criminology & Queer Theory at Birkbeck, University of London. Their teaching and research addresses questions of gender, sexuality, and justice, with a focus on feminist alternatives to imprisonment, policing, and punishment. Lamble has published widely on carceral politics, state violence, and the limitations of punitive approaches to addressing harm. Lamble's book *Unsafe: The Carceral Roots of the Anti-Trans Backlash* is forthcoming with Haymarket Books.

Alyosxa Tudor is Reader (Associate Professor) in Gender Studies at SOAS University of London and Chair of the Department of Gender Studies. Their main research interest lies in analysing knowledge productions on migrations, diasporas and borders in relation to critiques of Eurocentrism and to processes of gendering and racialisation. Their book *The Endurance of the Mare* is forthcoming with Cornell University Press.

Panel 3 – New Directions in Lesbian Studies (Roundtable)

Panel Abstract

In a moment of rising global illiberalism—marked by intensified attacks on feminists, queers, lesbians, and trans people—we are also witnessing what some describe as a lesbian renaissance. For this renewed focus on lesbian identities and communities to be sustainable and politically effective, it must draw on dyke and lesbian histories.

This panel brings together guest editors of recent *Journal of Lesbian Studies* special issues, including *The Dyke 90s*, *The Sapphic State*, and *Memory Work, Oral History, and Radical Public History in Global Lesbian Communities*. Panelists will present new research on lesbian histories, offer in-depth analyses of the Dyke 90s, and preview forthcoming work on lesbian contributions to political theory and social movements. Together, these collections chart new directions in Lesbian Studies. The session will also highlight opportunities for contributing to and publishing in the *Journal of Lesbian Studies*.

Participants & Biographies

Ella Ben Hagai





Ella Ben Hagai is an Associate Professor of Psychology at California State University, Fullerton, and the editor-in-chief of the *Journal of Lesbian Studies*.

Róisín Ryan-Flood

Róisín Ryan-Flood is a Professor of Sociology and Director of the Centre for Intimate and Sexual Citizenship at the University of Essex. She is co-editor of the journal *Sexualities: Studies in Culture and Society* (Sage).

Stacy I. Macías

Dr. Stacy I. Macías earned a Ph.D. in Women's Studies from the University of California Los Angeles (UCLA). She is currently an Associate Professor of Women, Gender, and Sexuality Studies at California State University, Long Beach. Her research and teaching are in women of color feminism, ethnic and cultural studies, feminist transnationalism, and queer of color theories. She is a co-founding member of Tongues, a queer, lesbian, and bisexual women of color project and zine. Her next research project examines disappearing Latina/Chicana lesbian and queer of color subterranean community sites due to gentrification and other structural processes.

Lily House-Peters

Lily House-Peters is a broadly trained environmental geographer and political ecologist interested in queer and feminist thought, environmental philosophy, climate justice and environmental racism/justice, natural resource extraction, governance and conservation policy, and the role of emerging robotics, smart technologies, and algorithms/AI in producing novel encounters with and new understandings of nature. She received her PhD from the University of Arizona, and is an Associate Professor of Geography at California State University, Long Beach.

Sarah-Joy Ford

Film Screening 1: Lesvia

Director Tzeli Hadjidimitriou

Movie Synopsis





On the southwestern coast of Lesbos Island in Greece lies the small agricultural village of Eressos which is the birthplace of Sappho, the first female poet to write about love between women.

For centuries, Eressos had been isolated from the rest of the world but in the mid-1970's, women from across the world began to arrive, in search for Sappho's traces. At first, the local inhabitants felt pride that these women had come to pay tribute to the great poet, born in their lands.

But in the middle of the 1980s, more women flocked to the island, including filmmaker Tzeli Hadzidimitriou, a lesbian born and raised on the island. The women lived on the beach, there were no separations of class, country or ethnicity. Expressing larger social and political developments, they proudly claimed the right to be called lesbians and to express their identity. This was a radical experience, offering them absolute freedom from the prejudice they had experienced at home. At the same time, it led to open conflict with the local inhabitants, who felt threatened by the lesbians.

In the 1990s, lesbians began to rent rooms and buy houses. Hotels and restaurants opened run exclusively for and by women. A lesbian bar opened in the middle of the village square. The conservative villagers of Eressos embraced the new economic force. Hetero normativity was turned on its head. Some villagers sided with the lesbians, identifying with a persecuted minority. Many of the local children came to consider lesbian relationships as natural and local women appreciated the freedom of the foreign women. Great change took place.

Today, a stable lesbian community of women from across the world lives in Eressos. Filmmaker Tzeli Hadzidimitriou is one of them, spending half of the year in the village.

The documentary is based on archival films and photographs as well as contemporary filming. The materials are combined with personal testimonies and excerpts from the director's diary, who records the story of lesbian community of Eressos through her personal experience.

Biography

I was born and raised on the island of Lesbos, whose light, landscapes, people, and everyday life are my source of inspiration. I am moved by all those stories, things and life forms that are on the verge of disappearing and being lost forever. In my work, I use all my experiences and possibilities, to give space and voice to ordinary people, who do not stand out in any way, but who live their lives in simplicity, outside daily headlines.





In all my previous works I have sought to capture the spirit of the people of Lesbos. In "Lesvia" – my first feature film – I also want to talk about my own intermediate, borderline experience as a proud member of the lesbian community and tell the story of how this community was created.

After the publication of my book "A Girl's Guide to Lesbos" in 2012, I started collecting pictures, shots, archival photos to tell a bigger story. This film is the result of ten years of filming during which I carried out in-depth interviews with members of the lesbian community, as well as with the local inhabitants. The interviews have been freely structured as a communal voice, giving people the space to be themselves.

With this documentary I try to discover what happened in the last 40 years in Eressos, where unexpected interactions changed the lives of inhabitants and visitors. Eressos itself, this stunning volcanic landscape with a three-kilometer beach, blue sea and unique light that inspired the poet Sappho, is one of the main characters in the film. It exists in the film in all four seasons and is intertwined with my own personal narrative and story. In this sense, the film takes the form of a personal essay film that documents not only my personal journey but also that of the village and the community.

This is a personal film as much as it is a collective film. It also documents the history of hundreds of lesbians who carved out a space for themselves and the history of the only lesbian community which continues to exist today, evolving and accepting new forms of gender diversities and offering a safe space for self-expression.

Workshop 1 – Lesbians Talk Issues Revisited – A Reading Group.

Nazmia Jamal

University College London

Abstract

Since October 2024 a group of dykes, queers and friends have been meeting in South London to read together. The aim of the group is to work our way through Scarlet Press's seminal pamphlet series 'Lesbians Talk Issues'. Every month the group works their way through the seven pamphlets: reading aloud, chronologically and from cover to cover. This workshop for Lesbian Lives 2026 will invite conference attendees to join our reading group. No pre-reading is required. Come as you are. Read, listen and be part of our reflections and discussion.





Biography

Nazmia Jamal is a London based researcher, educator and some-time curator. She is a PhD candidate based at UCL and is Paul Mellon Centre's New Narratives Doctoral scholar 2025–2028. The Lesbians Talk Issues Revisited digitisation project and reading group came out of her MRes project at the University of South Wales.

Panel 4 – The Apparitional Lesbian in Literature

VERBATIM REBUILD – PART 1

Contemporary Sapphic Sonneteers: A Creative-Theoretical Examination of the Lesbian Lineages of the Sonnet

Aishvarya Arora

Cornell University

Abstract

Sonnets most often evoke a masculine tradition, a form of courtly love. Yet, women and lesbians have long occupied and arranged the small, musical room of the sonnet. Scholar Lisa L. Moore recovers the historical & formal features of the lesbian sonnet, offering a framework for a lesbian reading of the sonnet's origins. Rather than the sonnet as something reclaimed, Moore demonstrates how women and Sapphic desires have fundamentally contributed to the creation and circulation of this form. In this paper, I'll extend Moore's reading towards contemporary, American sonnets, including poets like June Jordan, Marilyn Hacker, torrin a. greathouse, and Imani Davis. To encompass evolving queer terminology and signifiers as they've emerged since Moore's 2017 paper, I'll ask: what are the features and lineages of "butch" or "trans-masculine" sonnet? I'll share a series of "butch" sonnets I am writing that converse with Leslie Feinberg, Urvashi Vaid, Harryette Mullen, and others. I'll consider how the musicality of language enacts butch erotics, playing with sound to create poems that thrum in the mouth and the body. Further, I'll ask: how do we write and read in a way that recovers the tradition of the lesbian sonneteer? I'll offer pedagogical considerations for articulating formal





elements of the sonnet form in a way that foreground this lineage and center queer ways of thinking.

Biography

Aishvarya Arora is a poet, teaching artist, and cultural organizer from Queens, NY. They're the author of *Mr. Time* (Gold Line Press, 2026). Their writing has appeared in, or is forthcoming from, *Poetry*, *The Kenyon Review*, *Gulf Coast*, *The Hopkins Review*, and *Poetry Northwest*, among other publications. They've received support from the Fulbright Program, Brew and Forge, Tupelo Press's Merrill Family Scholarship, and the Asian American Writers' Workshop, where they were a Poetry Coalition fellow. Currently, they live in Ithaca, NY, where they are a lecturer in creative writing at Cornell University and create poetry ephemera through their micro-press, Lavender Codex. Find them online at coolslug.wordpress.com.

THE FOURTH PART: STYLE, THE SELF, ETHICS IN A SWEDISH BIOGRAPHICAL MINORITY HISTORY

Hanna Hallgren

Linnaeus University

Abstract

In this paper, I aim to discuss a central research question from my project "THE FOURTH PART...", situated within the field of artistic research. The study, which is realized through the writing of the autobiographical novels *The Hallelujah Girls I–III* and an academic article, investigates:

1. the meaning-making functions of style,
2. the situatedness of the textual self, and
3. how lived minority history—that is, socially subordinated narratives, in my case LGBTQI genealogy, as well as experiences tied to gender and class—can be rendered through a writing ethics that names without exposing.

This approach requires complex ethical considerations in both feminist academic and literary writing. Initially, I intend to reflect on ideas and writing experiences concerning whether a biographical textual self/I can be ethically and literarily figured as one who carries and narrates a minority history in the first person—so that the silenced voices of history (Foucault 1980) may emerge, without creating space for voyeurism from





the majority society. I also explore how a writing ethics that links feminist theory with literary writing practice might contribute to the development of biographical writing within both literature and gender studies.

Among the visions I hold for this project is the desire, as a writer and feminist scholar, to breathe life into the enumeration of sociopolitical categories—gender, class, sexual preference, race/ethnicity, ability, etc.—which frequently appear in gender studies research but, in my view, are rarely allowed to generate concrete meaning within academic texts. The researcher may situate herself, but the text remains unaffected; it neither tightens nor loosens. The “I” in the scholarly article risks appearing, stylistically, as both “authentic” and “autonomous”—phenomena that contradict key theoretical insights into the vulnerability and interdependence of subjects, as articulated by foundational feminist thinkers (Irigaray 1985, Braidotti 1994, among others).

Through this writing project, I seek to explore stylistic and ethical pathways that transcend the boundaries between fact and fiction, in pursuit of complex forms of knowledge production—or, as some might call them, poetic truths (Lykke 2009).

Biography

Hanna Hallgren is an author and Professor of Creative Writing at Linnaeus University, Sweden, as well as an Associate Professor in Gender Studies. Her work spans both academic and literary genres, with a focus on lesbian and queer lives, primarily within a Swedish context. She is currently developing an autobiographical novel series titled *Hallelujaflickorna*, written in experimental and lyrical prose. The series explores themes such as a childhood in the Salvation Army, coming out as a lesbian in the 1990s, life as a writer and academic, and experiences of mental illness. Hallgren is a long-standing researcher in the field of artistic research, where she has led and participated in numerous projects. Her scholarly interests include writing as method and ethical considerations in creative practice, and the responsibilities of authors who depict minority histories.

Literary Presence, Institutional Invisibility: Lesbians in Contemporary Polish Literature

Karolina Lewińska

University of Wrocław





Abstract

Poland remains one of the few European Union countries without legal recognition of same-sex partnerships. Lesbian women cannot marry, adopt, or form families recognised as worthy of protection. Legally and institutionally, they are largely invisible. For decades, this invisibility was mirrored in literature, where discourse on queer writing was dominated by male voices.

Recently, this silence has begun to shift. Female non-heteronormativity, as well as trans and nonbinary identities, have gained visibility in literary discourse. This paper examines key contemporary works that foreground lesbian subjectivity in Polish literature. All authors discussed are openly queer, and their writing often draws on autobiographical experience, shaping both literary form and political resonance.

Renata Lis, whose „Lesbos” reimagines Sappho and her successors, and her later work, „Moja ukochana i ja” („My Beloved and I”), are particularly significant. Combining autobiography with social critique, Lis recounts life outside heteronormativity in a country defined by heterosexual privilege. The book sparked public debate and has been compared to Didier Eribon’s analyses of social mobility, while also resonating with Maggie Nelson’s *The Argonauts*. Other authors explore lesbian subjectivity through anger and political engagement. Dorota Kotas, in her autofictional „Czerwony młoteczek”, conveys frustration with systemic homophobia. Patrycja Sikora’s poetry merges confessional modes with political and activist frameworks, situating lesbian experience within broader forms of resistance. Lis, Kotas, and Sikora exemplify a wider tendency: in most contemporary works, lesbian identity is framed primarily by exclusion, discrimination, and minority stress.

A few texts offer alternative representations. Laura Osińska’s „Jawa”, presents a rare depiction of joyful lesbian love, while Barbara Elmanowska’s „Woliera”, depicts a queer relationship in which non-heterosexuality is not the central concern.

These examples indicate that lesbian subjectivity in Polish literature remains shaped by oppression and social responsibility. The political climate compels many authors to produce interventionist works, limiting the literary development of lesbian characters. While no character could ever exist entirely “freely”, current social and political constraints restrict their diversity, complexity, and the range of stories told.

Biography

Karolina Lewińska is a PhD candidate in Literary Studies at the University





of Wrocław. Her research explores feminist and queer theories, contemporary literature, and sapphic representation in culture. She is currently working on her doctoral dissertation on non-heteronormativity in contemporary Polish literature.

Panel 5 – The Politics of Visibility

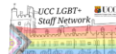
“But It Had to End Well”: Debating the Politics of Visibility in 1990s Canadian Lesbian-Driven Cinema

Tamara de Szegheo Lang Dan Vena

Queen’s University

Abstract

When asked by the authors about the reception of her film, *Skin Deep* (1995), Canadian filmmaker Midi Onodera recalled several queer and transgender audience members walking out of the screening in protest. Onodera, tired of so-called positive representations that she found simplistic, wanted to make a film that investigated the conflicts between lesbian and transgender communities. As Onodera’s film reflects, the 1990s proved to be a contentious time within queer and trans communities surrounding the politics of visibility and representation. In the context of the AIDS crisis and increasing violence against queer and trans people fuelling further political activism, including media activism, the question of how to be queer or trans on screen became a matter of great importance. In this paper, we focus on the politics of visibility in Canada, where the 1990s proved to be a golden era of lesbian-driven filmmaking, with the release of twelve narrative, feature-length works. While queer and trans filmmaking in the 1990s produced more films than ever before, there was no consensus on what these films should look like or how characters should be represented. In contrast to *Skin Deep*, two other Canadian films took different approaches to their lesbian characters. In *Dreamers of the Day* (1990), director Patricia Rivera Spencer wanted to present an ordinary love story between women where neither died at the end – a popular trope in earlier decades. In *Better Than Chocolate* (1999), the queer and trans protagonists rally together against institutional political repression. Drawing on the authors’ interviews with the directors, this paper argues that a return to this moment is necessary to further understand the competing tensions within queer and trans communities regarding the politics of representation. As questions of visibility now return, with growing





hostilities mounting against queer and trans individuals within Canadian and American politics, the need to continue these dialogues is once again a matter of great urgency.

Biography

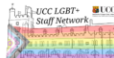
Tamara de Szegheo Lang is an Adjunct Assistant Professor in the Department of Film and Media at Queen's University and Associate Director of the Vulnerable Media Lab. Her research takes up queer history, community-based archives, and the affective relationships between queer people and the past. Her current SSHRC-funded project, *Bodies on Fire: Rekindling the Lesbian Decade in Canadian Film, 1990–1999*, is an archival investigation into the networks and collaborations that enabled a wave of lesbian films that were released in the decade. She has published in venues such as *Feminist Media Histories*, *Radical History Review*, and *Journal of Lesbian Studies*. Dr. de Szegheo Lang is also active in curatorial and programming roles. She is currently a member of the programming committee for the Reelout Queer Film Festival in Kingston, Ontario and is on the Advisory Board of OutHistory, a digital history platform.

Dan Vena is a Continuing Adjunct Associate Professor in the Department of Film and Media at Queen's University. He studies a range of topics including horror films, women's cinemas, fan-based reading practices, histories of medicine in the West, and death on screen. His solo and collaborative research has been published in *PUBLIC*, *Feminist Media Histories*, *Flow*, *Monstrum*, *Crime Fiction Studies*, and *Journal of Cinema and Media Studies*, as well as a variety of anthologies on horror and popular culture. His first monograph, *No More Chainsaws: Feminist Film Criticism and the New Wave of Women's Horror* (Rutgers University Press) is slated for release in April 2026. He also serves as the Co-Investigator on the SSHRC-funded project, *Bodies on Fire: Rekindling the Lesbian Decade in Canadian Film, 1990–1999*.

Widowed, Sad, and Sexless: Eddy's butch Vida and the limits of historic queer Latinx representation on television

Melissa Mora Hidalgo

California State University, Long Beach





Abstract

The Starz series *Vida* (2018–2020) made queer US Latinx television history during its three seasons on air, boasting a queer Latinx showrunner, writers’ room, and majority–queer Latinx cast and crew. *Vida* tells the story of two sisters who inherit their mother Vida’s bar and, along with it, her big secret – she was married to another woman, a butch named Eddy and the third inheritor of Vida’s legacy. Critics rightly celebrated the show’s “groundbreaking” portrayals of Latinx narratives centering gender, sexuality, and family battles amidst a gentrifying East Los Angeles neighborhood.

Yet five years after the final episode aired, I still think about Eddy. I’m disappointed in the show’s portrayal of the only “old school butch” character: a grieving widow dismissed by her deceased wife’s daughters who descends into depression, gets gay-bashed in a bar, and ends up rejecting the only ‘fem’ to show her any romantic interest. On a queer show where all the major characters – including the heterosexual ones – have lots of sex, poor Eddy remains sad and sexless for the whole series. I often wondered while watching the show, ‘is there a butch in this queer writers’ room?’

I propose an essay analyzing the character Edwina “Eddy” Martinez in the series *Vida*, who is often overlooked in most reviews and articles about the show when it aired, which I argue reflects a larger cultural elision of “butch” under the signs of “queer” or “trans*.” I focus on Eddy’s story arc over *Vida*’s three seasons towards a critique of the show’s challenging treatment of the only main “butch” character, demonstrating the limits of a “queer Latinx” perspective when representing Chicana butch life on television.

Biography

Melissa Mora Hidalgo, Ph.D., is a writer and scholar based in greater East Los Angeles. She is a Fulbright Fellow (University of Limerick, Ireland) and author of *Mozlandia: Morrissey Fans in the Borderlands*. Hidalgo has published widely in academic and popular venues, including *Journal of Lesbian Studies*, *Los Angeles Times*, *L.A. Taco*, and *RTÉ Brainstorm*. Hidalgo currently teaches film, popular culture, literature, and queer studies classes in the Women’s, Gender, & Sexuality Studies Department at California State University, Long Beach. She is working on an essay collection about butch life in pop culture and beyond.





Serious Business: Publishing Lesbian Erotica into the 90s

Isabel Imhorst

King's College London

Abstract

Is erotic writing inconsistent with “serious literature”? With “serious politics”? This paper examines *Serious Pleasure* (1989) and *More Serious Pleasure* (1990), two anthologies of lesbian erotica published by Sheba Feminist Press in the context of a recently enacted Section 28 and the British “lesbian sex wars.” These collections reconfigured existing dichotomies between “serious” literature and erotic writing, positioning sexual narratives as a central mode of lesbian cultural production and political intervention.

This paper will offer short close readings of Bernadette Halpin’s *Box S217*, Barbara Smith’s *The Art of Poise*, and Spike Pittsberg’s *Material Girls*, tracing how the collections negotiate intersections of sexuality with other identity markers. *Box S217* exposes the intersections of political identity and desire in lesbian dating; *The Art of Poise* blends prose poetry with the language of feminist criticism, staging questions about objectification, power, and pleasure within the erotic encounter itself. *Material Girls*, from *More Serious Pleasure*, situates lesbian desire within a queer club scene, framing S/M performance as part of everyday dyke sociability and representing a radical consent culture. Through a comparison of these stories’ main political concerns and narrative strategies, this paper will highlight how Sheba’s editorial strategies functioned to embrace dissonance and frame erotic discourse as historically and politically consequential. By refusing to section stories by theme, identity, or style, the anthologies demanded that readers encounter difference—of class, race, sexual practice, and politics—without editorial resolution, thus modelling multiplicity as a political method.

By reading *Serious Pleasure* and *More Serious Pleasure* as interventions in both literature and activism, the paper frames “serious pleasure” as a generative tension: the interplay of erotic investments, literary experimentation, and political commitment that shaped a distinctly queer feminist publishing culture in Britain at the turn of the 1990s.

Biography

Isabel Imhorst is a third-year PhD Candidate at King’s College London,





writing on lesbian literary production and its intersections with broader LGBTQ+ and feminist movements from the 1980s to the early 2000s. She is interested in a combination of archival and literary approaches, which seek to recover and recontextualise lesbian fiction. Her previous work has centred on activism in libraries and queer bibliographic practice. Her PhD project is funded by the London Arts and Humanities Partnership.

Panel 6 – Queer Voices, Silences, and Public Cultures

Lesbian/Feminist/Queer Silences from East Asia

Grace En-yi Ting

University of Hong Kong

Abstract

As a Taiwanese American lesbian and queer feminist living between Hong Kong, Taiwan, Japan, and the U.S., I ask: How do we find ways to speak across severed worlds of language, politics, and empathy when everything we have tried seems to have failed? As a literary studies scholar, I could present a paper entirely on readings of queer female texts that travel across time and space, such as Qiu Miaojin, Li Kotomi, and Yang Shuang-zí's stories that dance between Japan, Taiwan, Asian America, and other parts of the world. Instead, I move between readings of literature and anecdotes from my everyday life in Chinese, Japanese, and English, from proper modes of literary criticism to spoken word poetry. Can one make sense of Taiwan's status as the first place in Asia to legalize gay marriage along with a case of horrible doxxing of a lesbian writer by Taiwanese non-binary TERFs? Where can I share "minor" stories of homophobia, ableism, and trauma experienced by my Chinese friends? If one's voice has been shut down by governments or online violence, can one find a new voice through poetry instead? How can I give voice to what has not been heard—or has been heard by too few—when I myself am traumatized by the content of my research?

My presentation is a collection of small tragedies, unexpected contradictions, refusal to see violence, and rare intimacies, overflowing with grief and frustration from where I am silenced and seeking to resonate with others silenced in ways that I have not heard.





Biography

Grace En-yi Ting is an assistant professor of gender studies at the University of Hong Kong specializing in queer feminist approaches to Japanese studies, particularly women writers, girls' culture, and cuteness. Her recent work engages with frameworks of Global Asias by reorienting Japanese literature through transnational flows of queer/feminist texts and politics circulating between Japan, Hong Kong, Taiwan, and Asian America. She also writes on problems of marginalization involving race and gender in the academy. She has been interviewed on feminist/LGBT+ issues in East Asia as well as anti-Asian violence by CNN, TIME, The China Project, SCMP, and RTHK *The Pulse*.

Sexual Fluidity Challenges for Women in Hungary

Anita Kricsfalvi

Abstract

Sexual fluidity challenges for women in Hungary- based on my new novel *Triangle at Lake Iseo*, I would like to do a presentation of my novel and by doing so focus on some of the key issues women face at a mid life turning point when they fall in love with a woman while being married with kids... Some of the relevant points to be discussed:

- socialisation of women with special regard to Hungary where the main character of the novel faces challenges regarding her sexual fluidity
- prejudices, male dominance, stereotypes
- internalised homophobia related to sexual fluidity
- what about the kids?
- polyamory as a possible model for the well being of all

As an individual paper I would be pleased to present this topic.

Biography

I am a 52 year old Hungarian copyright lawyer practicing in Hungary, dedicated to gender and women's issues related especially to sexual fluidity and same sex relationships of women. I am also a writer, my first novel available in Hungarian (*Jutalomközpont*) and in Italian (*La ricompensa della Volpe*) was published in 2019 and 2020. My new novel to be published in 2026 in English and in Hungarian and later on also in Italian entitled *Triangle at Lake Iseo* is going to focus on sexual fluidity and polyamory as seen in Italian Renaissance and today. It is a contemporary story between two women, a psychotherapist and a historian who get involved in a bizarre love triangle in Italy at Lake Iseo.





This novel has clear references to the 16th century Italy, when Margaret of Parma, Duchess of Parma and Piacenza, an iconic woman of her age for gender and women's independence had a lesbian relationship with the poet from Siena called Laudomia Forteguerra.

'A Voice Answering a Voice': The Radical Queer Ecology of Virginia Woolf's 'Orlando: A Biography'

Chetana Gavini

University of Sussex

Abstract

This paper explores the eroticisation of nature as a romantic partner in Virginia Woolf's gender- and genre-bending *Orlando: A Biography* and its film adaptation by Sally Potter. The novel follows the life of its titular protagonist, Orlando, who possesses a curiously long lifespan and undergoes a significant gender transformation halfway through the narrative. Building on Roger Hecht's analysis of the female pastoral in the novel, I explore how the symbolic marital union of a female Orlando with a feminine nature challenges long-established heterosexist and patriarchal paradigms, allowing for a uniquely eco-conscious connection to the natural world. I investigate how the queering of Orlando's relationship to land and landscape enables them to develop a new way of 'seeing' nature—one that moves beyond a predominantly heteronormative and anthropocentric view of nature as something to be owned and possessed, evolving into a more primal and immersive manner of experiencing the environment. This argument is developed further by referencing the work of Jiddu Krishnamurti and queer ecological critics like Nicole Seymour. I also explore how such a fundamental change in perception is poignantly mirrored in Orlando's changing poetic voice, which transitions from its initial satirical tone into an honest and sincere medium of expression for the secret, queer love between Orlando and the natural world.

Biography

Chetana Gavini has completed her Master's in English at King's College London after which she went into teaching Elective English Literature to High School students in India. She is now pursuing her PhD in English at





the University of Sussex. Her research is primarily concerned with queer ruralism and pastoralism in queer modernist texts.

Film Screenings: Uncovering Lesbian Lives in Animated Film

Barb Taylor

Toronto Animated Image Society, Liaison of Independent Filmmakers of Toronto, Canadian Media Producers Association

Short Films Synopsis

Barb's short animated films explore the many dimensions of lesbian life, weaving together themes of lesbian parenting, gender-queer children, heartbreak and playful reflections on everyday experiences. Through animation, she celebrates the love, humour, resilience, and complexity that shape lesbian lives and as she explores mythology, opens our minds to new forms for queer animation.

Biography

Barb Taylor is an award-winning animation Director exploring queerness, magic and mythology, based in Canada. Her recent short, *The Butch and the Baby Daddy* (2023), about a parenthood journey, is available on CBC Gem. Previously she created the traditional cell animation *Bobbi and Sheelagh* (2018), about a lesbian who meets a mythological creature. Digital animation explorations of children's gender expression include *Peaceosaurus* (2011) and *Tomboy* (2009). Currently she's working on her first animated feature, queering an ancient myth tied to her Irish heritage and LGBTQ+ identity. Her films have screened at 300+ festivals worldwide, winning awards such as CBC Canadian Reflection Award.

She's received support from the National Film Board and Canadian Media Fund among others. She's been an invited speaker at Queer Tech, Toronto Animated Image Society, Liaison of Independent Filmmakers of Toronto and provided an Animation Masterclass at Ajayu Animation Festival, Peru.

Spotlight on LGBTQIA+ and dementia





Dr. Clare Hammerton

University of Exeter

Film Synopsis

In February 2026, a collaborative group of researchers, advocacy organisations, trainers, and people living with dementia, co-delivered the 'Spotlight on LGBTQIA+ and dementia' in-person [day event](#). Our short film describes key learning and the impact of the event from some of those who attended (11 min).

Participants included people and carers living with dementia, dementia organisations, LGBTQIA+ community organisations, Health and Social Care representatives, and housing providers. Half of whom identified as LGBTQIA+, half did not.

Our aim was to address sector-wide gaps in knowledge on historical and legislative contexts (historical and legislative), resources, and experiences and insights from of LGBTQIA+ people living with dementia. It discussed research and training approaches, built connections and the confidence of participants to take action in their work and lives, to address inequities.

Pre-recorded lived experience clips were shown on how dementia impacts people differently. These included a trans person with young-onset dementia, a lesbian couple in their 50's with children and grandchildren whose careers have needed to change, and an older lesbian couple, who dance together in the care home every day. (We will share one of these clips will be shared).

Discussion topics emerged on mental health prevalence; Health and Care experiences; micro-aggressions and discrimination; impact of lifestyles and cultures; identity changes through dementia; minority-stress factors; and recognition of families and communities of support. We questioned systemic change to address negative and discriminatory practices and how to increase knowledge to create sustainable impact.

Impact showed that levels of knowledge and collaborative networks could effect change through local, in-person, multi-agency events.

Biography

Dr Clare Hammerton specialises in the delivery of rights – based approaches to involve people and carers across ages, genders, and from





diverse backgrounds in the development and delivery of social care, community, and research projects across county, regional, and national geographical areas.

She has extensive experience of leading multi-agency partnerships and teams to achieve the collaborative design and delivery of innovative social care and community engagement practices

Her research on mainstreaming rights and participatory approaches, enables the involvement of people and carers from diverse communities through UK Dementia Networks and the International Development, Health, Social Care, and community and research projects she has worked with.

Workshop 2 – Lesbians Spaces, Dyke Nights

Aoife O’ Toole and Neev Kennedy

Abstract

Pumping music and euphoric crowds, go-go dancers and drag performers, flashing lights, gender-neutral bathrooms, leather dykes and carabiners. Lesbian parties are sites of expression, solidarity, joy and activism. In this workshop we’ll work through organising Dyke Nite, reducing harm in nightclub environments and intersectional promotion. We want to make events that are financially accessible but also center queer people who don’t necessarily fall into the hegemonic cis gay man role. This workshop is highly interactive, with the purpose of empowering one another to go forward and create amazing lesbian spaces that benefit lesbian life and living in the arts. There will be examples of events, budgets, how to safe-guard spaces and more.

Aoife and Neev draw from experiences of running Dyke Nite in Limerick, Cork and Dublin to trace a brief history of lesbian nights, inheritance of lesbian spaces, and a how-to creatively make spaces for Dykes and the people who love them. You will walk away from this workshop with events organising knowledge and your own lino printed handkerchief, ready to signal at the next queer party. This workshop is for anyone who wants to create the event of their dreams, reflect on past queer events or simply enjoy talking about how we can all ensure sexy safety at all community gatherings.





Biography:

Aoife O'Toole, AKA DJ Egg, is a multidisciplinary visual artist and dyke DJ. Their practice falls under the exploration of queerness in contemporary Ireland through community building, graphics and DJing.

Their visual work has been realised through flyer design, zines, 3D Modelling, illustrations and live AV performances. Their visual works have been showcased at IMMA, Dublin Modular at Smock Alley Theatre and EVA International. In 2021 they held a design residency at Yamamori Tengu as their in house designer. They are the resident designer of Dyke Nite (Limerick) and Ar Ais Aris (Galway).

As a DJ, Aoife has been rising and creating communities on the dance floor for 8+ years. They are a co-founder of Dyke Nite with Neev Kennedy. Past gigs they've headlined; Open Ear, Camdium Club at All Together Now, Rhythm Clash at Fuinneamh Festival, Ar Ais Aris, Gash Collective, Club Comfort, Rise Up Soundsystem and Honeypot

Neev Kennedy is a dyke based in Cork city. Neev has held positions for three years in both TUS Students' Union Limerick and in Aontas na Mac Léinn in Éirinn (AMLÉ), as the Vice President for Equality and Citizenship, proudly advocating and representing students from diverse backgrounds across Ireland.

They have been successfully organising events in Limerick and Cork city for 8+ years for the queer community, from high-energy, DIY events that defy Ireland's limited nightlife hours to events catered to local community development. Neev cofounded Limerick Dyke Nite in 2022 alongside Aoife O'Toole. Neev graduated from LSAD with a BA in Print Contemporary Practice in 2022 with a practice that centers around lesbian sexuality, experience and love. Neev continues to advise and teach Students' Unions across Ireland on event safety, conflict management and EDI policies.





Panel 7 – Genealogical Thinking

**“Life without you in the army – well, honey, I hate to even think of it.”:
Exploring the relationships of lesbian enlistees in the US Women’s
Army Corps, 1943–1946**

Katie Marshall

University of Sussex

Abstract

The core aim of this project is to bring to light the lives, relationships, and experiences of these women, with a particular focus on those in romantic relationships with other enlistees, in order to situate their words within wider historical scholarship. It is particularly key to me to explore the impact of these relationships using primary material, in order to amplify voices that have been somewhat lost in archives. Two such voices are Esther Herbert and Marvyl Doyle, who donated the entirety of their lives to the ONE Archives at USC in 2011, and who have largely been lost to time. Esther and Marvyl’s letters make up the backbone of this paper – other sources include the personal papers of Dorothée Gore, the recollections of Pat Bond, and anonymous contributions to the magazines *Frontiers* and *Mother Jones*. Using this range of archival materials, I will discuss the unique lesbian connections that flourished during the Second World War within the US Women’s Army Corps. The migration of enlistees across the country, to and from both rural and urban areas, created a previously-unseen opportunity for lesbians to connect, and played a major role in the emergence of the more widespread lesbian culture that emerged later in the ‘40s and throughout the twentieth century. I put forward that it was the connections forged and the cultures created in the WAC that laid the foundation for this cultural shift. This paper forms part of a wider project on the lives, relationships, and cultural impacts of lesbian enlistees in the US Women’s Army Corps during the Second World War, which I have developed through my MA and hope to continue at the PhD level.

Biography

Katie is a postgraduate student in Sexual Dissidence at the University of Sussex. Having completed her undergraduate degree in American Studies at the University of Sussex and the University of Vermont in Burlington, VT, she has recently finished her MA with a focus on lesbian





history in the US, and hopes to continue this work at the PhD level in the upcoming year. She is particularly interested in lesbian culture and history in the long twentieth century, and is currently working with archived collections of love letters, diaries, and magazine contributions to map out the migration of lesbians enlisting in the Second World War.

Exploring Lesbian Histories and Queer Futures of Boat-Dwelling on the UK Canals

Georgia Dimdore-Miles

Royal Holloway, University of London

Abstract

What can be learnt by shifting our historical and contemporary focus of queer spaces from the fixed to the fluid? Much like the narrators of this project, this research refuses to settle – cruising the canals of the UK is a lesbian lineage neither rooted in the pumping urban milieu or rural backwaters. Tracing this lesbian lineage of contemporary queer canal boat-dwelling from the mid – late 20th-century to today, this research looks to an unexplored facet of alternative housing in the UK. Homes have been crafted on the edge, held by the ever-flowing waterways, these houseboats have, and continue to, contain queer worlds of utopian potential, the agency to be mobile, to cruise, to find a home in the flow. Using autoethnographic fieldnotes from her own stays on queer houseboats on the East London canals and initial oral history interviews with boat dykes, Georgia explores a novel perspective of 20th/21st century lesbian / queer worldbuilding, emphasising freedom, agency, desire, opportunity, liminality and resistance.

Biography

Georgia Dimdore-Miles is in the first year of her PhD at Royal Holloway entitled *Cruising the Cut: Lesbian histories of mobility and queer futures of boat dwelling on the UK's canals*. The project documents a previously unwritten lesbian lineage of alternative housing and turns to a future of queer worldbuilding on the waterways. Previously she has worked in oral history and community archiving and has been running *Misscoteque*, a Bristol-based queer nightlife and archival project, for four years. She is also a DJ and vinyl selector and regularly plays at queer events across Bristol and London.





Lesbian Trans Subjectivities in Punk Music and Culture

Duna Torres Martín

Abstract

Lesbian trans subjectivities in punk music and culture: Punk music and alternative anticapitalist culture has been historically associated with both gender variance (with artists like Jayne County or Vaginal Davis pioneering punk music and aesthetics) and queer attraction (some of the most important figures of protopunk and early punk being bisexual artists like Lou Reed or Alice Bag). In this paper, the focus of a punk historical research centers itself specifically in creating a genealogy and history of lesbian non binary and trans subjectivities in punk and alternative music, focused on both transfem and transmasculine experiences told in first person through the music, as well as exploring how songs in those genres (punk, hardcore, grunge, riot grrrl, etc.) have communicated specifically lesbian experiences and how they affect the artists' perception of themselves and their romantic and/or sexual relationships, mental health, gender non-conformity and community. With deep study into bands like Team Dresch, Against Me!, Kicking Giant, She/Her/Hers and Tribe 8, as well as research and interviews with lesbian trans performers (including some of the members of those bands), tattoo and comic artists, and organizers in punk scenes, this paper intends to trace a relational map of the alternative, punk, leather and related subcultures in regards to lesbian trans identity, and how its struggles and experiences interact and intersect.

Biography

Duna Torres Martín is a transfem lesbian writer, sound engineer, journalist, collagist and musician from Madrid, Spain. With masters studies in cultural journalism and ample experience in organizing events and in queer music and comics journalism and archival, she has been published in various anthologies and zines, including '99% Chance of Magic: Stories of Strength and Hope for Transgender Kids' (Heartspark Press). Faer work, both fictional and non-fictional/research wise, usually deals with mental & physical health themes, LGBT+ issues, memory and relationships. You can see more of their work and contact them at their website: <https://dunahaller.pb.studio/>





Turning the Tables: A Speculative Sonic Genealogy on *All Fours*

Cameron Jade MacDonald

University of Toronto

Abstract

In *Queer Phenomenology*, Sara Ahmed calls for a shift in orientation towards “other kinds of tables” (63) that enable and are enabled by other forms of gathering around, with, and beyond this object so central to phenomenological inquiry. One way in which Ahmed suggests lesbian orientation in particular enacts this is by engaging the push-and-pull magnetism of cisgendered, heteronormative interpellation—to “hear [its] hail, and even feel its force on the surface of the skin,” but to not turn around, and instead “listen to the sound of ‘the what’ that fleets” (106). This paper takes up Ahmed’s twinned attentions to tables and sonority during the twentieth anniversary of *Queer Phenomenology*’s publication by constellating scenes across media where four-legged mattering couples with attunements to sonic phenomena in ways that situate and (re)collect possibilities for lesbian and trans inhabitancy, collectivity, loving, and living. Tracing an unexpected line across Gertrude Stein’s “A Centre in a Table,” Djuna Barnes’ *Nightwood*, June Jordan’s “Patricia’s Poem,” and SOPHIE and Evita Manjí’s “Gallop,” I propose these cultural workers draw upon various tables—kitchen tables, turntables, or otherwise—to retune, remix, and reencounter both the technologies of “sound recording,” but also the technologies of gender, race, sex, and sexuality through which such “queer moments of deviation” (Ahmed 179) arise. Furthermore, through the disorienting excess of media I wish to table, I argue the fleeting connections across this unlikely foursome draw out the possibility of delineating novel solidarities for living-with across difference—ones which may seem unsound, but which nevertheless sound out.

Biography

CJ MacDonald is a trans scholar and SSHRC Canada Graduate Scholarship – Doctoral (CGS-D) recipient in the Department of English at the University of Toronto. Her scholarly interests orbit around American literature, sound studies, and queer and trans theories, with a focus on how sonic phenomena can intimate vital shifts in navigating queer and trans inhabitancies, embodiments, and belongings. Her most recent musings have been published by *Bloomsbury*, *Humanities*, *Journal of*





Popular Music Studies, Routledge, and Sound Studies: An Interdisciplinary Journal, but more often she is musing elsewhere and otherwise through her creative practices as a poet and musician. The rest of her bio is in that transit.

Panel 8 – Finding Ourselves in a Book: Lesbians Reading

Gender Non-Conformity Pronouns in Literature

Lena Mattheis

University of Surrey

Abstract

There has recently been a lot of backlash against inclusive language practices and specifically against inclusive use of pronouns. The Argentinian government is banning inclusive language (John 2024), the French government is moving in the same direction (Gingins 2023), and although German law is making it easier for nonbinary and trans people to self-identify (Germany 2024), the conservative local government of Bavaria has made inclusive language unlawful for all state authorities, including schools (Deutsche Welle, 2024.). Although these policies affect language in countless ways, pronouns are emblematic of this backlash with several prominent politicians even proudly proclaiming ‘pronoun bans.’

At the same time, literary texts using what I refer to as gender non-conformity (GNC) pronouns are flourishing. Novels, poems, and stories that use singular they, neopronouns or even mixed pronouns for their characters are finding creative ways of using narrative form to question patterns of pronoun ascription and agency. By subtly subverting expectations, these texts invite us to reconsider assumptions about gender and gendered language. In this presentation, I would therefore like to explore the function of literary discourse in conversations about GNC pronouns and lay out some of the highly innovative formal interventions texts such as *Maia Kobabe’s Gender Queer* (2019), *Kai Cheng Thom’s Fierce Femmes and Notorious Liars* (2016) and *Isaac Fellman’s Dead Collections* (2022) use to introduce pronouns that express gender non-conformity and deal with the backlash against them. In refusing to make pronoun ascription an easy and unambiguous process, these texts are queering and transing pronouns and creating fascinating reflections on agency and literary form, while also reminding readers that pronoun sharing can have powerful repercussions.





Biography

Dr Lena Mattheis (they/she) is a lecturer in contemporary literature at the University of Surrey and specialises in queer and trans literature, narrative studies, and literary geography. Lena's forthcoming monograph *Queer Forms and Pronouns: Gender Nonconformity in Anglophone Literature* (Oxford University Press, March 2026) reflects Lena's interest in narratives of gender nonconformity and nonbinary thinking. Since April 2021, Lena has been hosting the *Queer Lit* podcast and has recorded conversations with Sara Ahmed, Susan Stryker, Jack Halberstam, and many other inspiring scholars. In addition to another monograph, *Translocality in Contemporary City Novels*, Lena's work has been published in journals such as *Narrative*, *Transnational Literature*, *Literary Geographies*, and *WSQ*. Lena has previously worked at the University of Duisburg-Essen in Germany, at the University of Namibia, and is also the creator of the Listenqueer.co.uk app.

A Neglected Foremother: June Arnold and *The Cook* and *The Carpenter* and *Sister Gin*

Andrea Freud

Abstract

This paper attempts to reclaim a significant lesbian feminist foremother, June Arnold (1926–1982), who was not only a visionary novelist but the founder of the first Women and Press Conference, and of Daughters' Press. A close examination of her novel, *the Cook and The Carpenter* (1973 dedicated in memoriam) to the Fifth Street Women's Building, illustrates how Arnold's use of neutral or non-binary pronouns dismantles heteronormative gender and sexual roles and explores new, more authentic possibilities. Her intersectional description of the collective's attempt to establish a center for local women reveals both the revolutionary and self-defeating aspects of the early radical lesbian feminist movement. *Sister Gin* in turn, rescues fat, menopausal, and especially old women from the toxic self-hatred Western women are taught as we age, and explores new sexual and textual sites. The paper also includes Dr. Freud's own experience of the early lesbian feminist movement.





Biography

Andrea Freud, previously published as Andrea Freud Loewenstein, born in 1949, is the first-generation daughter of parents who escaped from Hitler and settled in the Boston area. She is the author of three books including *This Place*, set in a women's prison, and numerous stories, essays, papers, and journalism. She has been a teacher for sixty years, first establishing community writing centers in a women's prison, a public housing project, and a psych ward, later serving as the director of the Goddard College low-residency MFA program and finally as Associate Professor of English at Medgar Evers College, CUNY. After getting her MA at the University of Wisconsin she moved back to the Boston area, where she wrote for *Gay Community News* and was part of the sex-positive lesbian community there. She lived in London for three years and got her PhD from the University of Sussex. She lives with her partner in Brooklyn, New York, and Tiverton, Rhode Island.

Lesbian Readers, Lesbians Reading: The Role of Literature in Our Lives

Anna Klimek

Jagiellonian University

Abstract

In my paper, I would like to present some ideas about the role of lesbian literature in lesbian lives. There are two main aspects I plan to discuss: reading lesbian literature privately as a way to explore one's identity, and reading lesbian literature publicly as a way to signal one's identity. The significance of reading and literature has often been portrayed by lesbian writers themselves. In the preface to her academic publication *Chloes Plus Olivia*, Lillian Faderman laments that despite reading sapphic authors, she had never been taught about lesbian themes in their works. In Alison Bechdel's graphic memoir *Fun Home*, the author-narrator-protagonist uses libraries and books to research her identity, both in non-fiction and classic literature. In Nancy Garden's novel *Annie on My Mind*, the two main characters realise their teachers are queer by browsing through their home library and finding familiar titles of lesbian novels.

However, the theme of lesbians reading has also appeared in other





media. For instance, the TV show *Glee* features a lesbian character recognising another woman's flirtation with her because of a stack of Virginia Woolf novels on her desk, while the speaker in Frankie Cosmos's queer-coded love song *Sappho* wonders if her love interest is reading Sappho.

By referring to these and other works, as well as critical and theoretical texts on the subject matter, I would like to present and outline my own approach to the role and meaning of literature in lesbian lives. I believe that a new discussion of the first aspect, reading lesbian literature privately, will emphasise that reading about yourself is still an important act nowadays, whereas the presentation of the second aspect will offer an interpretation of reading lesbian literature publicly as a form of flagging.

Biography

Anna Klimek is a PhD student at the Doctoral School in the Humanities at the Jagiellonian University (Kraków, Poland), specialising in literary studies and contemporary literature in English. She is researching the categories of lesbian and sapphic auto/biographies while working on a PhD dissertation on representations of lesbian gender in 21st-century life-writing. Her academic interests also include women's poetry, queer and feminist speculative fiction, and media portrayals of sexuality and neurodiversity.

'We are something by ourselves': transmasculine strategies in Mary Renault's fiction

Kit Fryatt

Dublin City University

Abstract

Accounts of Mary Renault's literary career usually propose a sharp division between her first six novels, set in contemporary England, and the later historical fiction which made her, in Lisa Lynne Moore's words, 'the twentieth century's bestselling lesbian writer.' Her turn to Ancient Greece with *The Last of the Wine* (1956) is frequently explained as a move that allowed her to write more directly about male homosexuality and is aligned—somewhat imprecisely—with her emigration to South Africa in 1947.





This paper traces one line of contentious continuity across Renault's career: female masculinity and/or transmasculinity, which I conceptualise within a tradition including work by Jack Halberstam, J. Bobby Noble, and Alison Oram. Two early novels, *Purposes of Love* (1939) and *The Friendly Young Ladies* (1944) treat female masculinity as a state of inevitable erotic failure. Meanwhile, transmasculine concerns remain evident in the preoccupations of *The Charioteer* (1953). In the historical fiction, female or transmasculinity find forms which need not conclude in discomfiture, though *Funeral Games* (1981) demonstrates that dysphoric humiliation remains in Renault's repertoire until the end. However, her most successful articulation of transmasculine experience is found in *The Persian Boy* (1972). I argue that rather than reading Renault's oeuvre as bisected between contemporary and historical fiction, *The Persian Boy* can be understood as the fulfilment of a long-standing personal and artistic ambition.

Biography

Kit Fryatt lectures in English at Dublin City University. His recent books include *Austin Clarke: An Introduction* (Aberdeen University Press, 2020) and *Book of Inversions* (co-authored with Harry Gilonis, Veer2, 2025).

Panel 9 – Queer Gendering & Feminist Erotics

Podcast as Practice: (Un/)Intentionally Constructing Self and Gender Together

Shereen "SHU" Perera

Tokyo University of the Arts

Abstract

What can a lesbian podcast teach us about self, community and culture?

Since the Performative Turn in the humanities and social sciences since the 1960s, performativity continues to expand from its linguistic base to deconstruction, gender, queer and colonial studies and further afield. Though an "unsettling aberrance" still exists between performativity and theatricality (Sedgwick 2003) as well as a "confusion" between performativity and performance itself (Isekiri 2010).





By examining a podcast by members within the Tokyo lesbian community, this paper looks at how conversation acts as a performative mechanism which critiques, establishes and experiments with bases of words, language common knowledge. In doing so, it attempts to utilise and explore this confusion in and around identity, sex and gender.

Through various means of verbal and non-verbal communication, people seek to "present images of ourselves" as opposed to purely transmitting information (Goffman 1959). Conversational style in particular derives its impact from processes of "identification between audience and speaker" (Tannen 1984). It serves to reason then, that we may be constructing ourselves through conversational communication.

Many gender rules and dynamics are created, played with and shared within the confines of the bar or izakaya walls within lesbian spaces such as Shinjuku, Ikebukuro, Roppongi and outside of Tokyo such as Doyama in Osaka though with minimal overlap. Most members not only stick to one area but predominantly a specific bar. This paper looks to the podcast *Boi-tachi wa dou ikiru ka?* (How do the Bois live?), hosted by and for members who frequent such spaces. It demonstrates how the podcast and the conversations that occur exist as a location in which mutual language, concepts and terms around relationships, genders, sex and appearance can be discussed, and seeks to prove that in conversation, identity is both performatively and theatrically established with others

Biography

Perera is a PhD candidate at Tokyo University of the Arts (TUA) in the area of arts research/art and sociology with a focus on queer research methods. Perera first went to Japan on an international exchange to Waseda University as a part of their Bachelor's at UCD (BMus International 2015). After accumulating experience teaching both EFL and Japanese at a variety of levels, Perera returned to academia graduating with a master's degree from TUA (MPhil 2025). Their most recent work has been in lesbian and alternative masculinities with theatre self-expression and performance, as well as *Coming Out with Speech-Act Theory*. S/he is set to publish papers both in Japanese and English in 2026.

Perera also is active as an actor and vocalist within Tokyo, and is the podcast host of *Boi-tachi wa dou ikiru ka?* (How do the Bois live?) (『ボ





イたちはどう生きるか』) based on stories from within Tokyo lesbian communities.

Living an (In)human Transbian Life

Jay Szpilka

SWPS University

Abstract

In her famous *Words to Victor Frankenstein*, Susan Stryker pronounced that the post-enlightenment norms of humanity suit trans people poorly—and suggested that an embrace of trans (in)humanity over trying to fit into fundamentally trans-antagonistic, cisnormative patterns of living a human life. In this paper, I want to present two unique ways in which Stryker’s suggestion has been taken up within contemporary trans lesbian sexual cultures.

Specifically, I want to show how two niche, mostly online transbian sexual cultures—puppygirls and drone kink—show a practical, sexual way of embracing trans (in)humanity. Puppygirls are a form of pet play kink which has in recent years developed into a unique sexual style among online trans women, while drone kink is a specifically trans form of latex fetishism and power exchange play.

My argument is that seemingly irrelevant, if not ridiculous sexual styles that circulate among transbians online can be understood as more than just an expression of desire, but also show a surprisingly grounded approach to putting trans theory into lived practice, thus following Thalia Mae Bettcher’s call for trans (and in this case, trans lesbian) thinking to emerge from daily conditions of trans “wtf.” Trans (in)humanity is therefore shown to be more than just an abstract concept, but rather a way of living a (trans lesbian) life under conditions of hegemonic cisness, even as patterns of whiteness and ageism continue to haunt and limit it.

Biography

Jay Szpilka is a post-doctoral fellow at the SWPS University in Warsaw, where she is currently working on a research project on the relationship between trans femininity and kink.





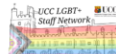
Lesbian Sexual Joy as Feminist Method: Reclaiming the Erotic Against Cisheteronormativity

JJ Wright

MacEwan University

Abstract

In a moment when many interventions against gender-based violence remain tethered to cisheteronormative relational logics, lesbian sexual joy offers a decisive alternative. Informed by insights from The Queer Joy! Project—a participatory study with queer and trans youth—this paper presentation shifts the analytic focus from what contemporary interventions fail to disrupt toward what lesbian erotic practice can produce: new forms of knowing, accountability, and collective imagination. I argue that lesbian sexual joy functions as a counter-epistemology—an embodied feminist method that displaces disciplinary scripts of endurance and reorients intimacy toward reciprocity, autonomy, and collective flourishing. Drawing on lesbian feminist theory and especially Audre Lorde’s formulation of the erotic as embodied power and knowledge, I examine how lesbian erotic practice cultivates ethical relationality. This relationality is marked by embodied modes of discernment and mutual responsiveness that generate situated knowledges about desire, consent, and relational accountability. Attending to findings from visual arts-based research, this paper maps how lesbian erotic life is learned, rehearsed, and taught as a method for producing alternative relational grammars—practices that both diagnose the limits of prevailing violence prevention strategies and instantiate possibilities for feminist worldmaking. I understand lesbian sexual joy as neither sentimental nor escapist but, rather, methodological and political. By treating the erotic as epistemic work, this paper proposes concrete pathways through which lesbian intimate practices inform pedagogies, policies, and solidarities that resist cisheteropatriarchal constraint and the violence of rape culture. In centering lesbian joy as theory, method, and ethic, my argument emphasizes the importance of the erotic—and





across walking, gathering, storytelling, and co-creation, her projects operate as catalysts for connection, reflection, and action, stimulating creative change-making at individual, communal, and ecological levels.

Greer Ralston – Giving It All To Art

Rachel Dax

University of South Wales, Cardiff University

Film

The lives and works of lesbian artistic geniuses are largely overshadowed by their male heterosexual counterparts. Even when their output is exceptional, they are likely to be less publicised, and then written out of History unless other lesbians commit to documenting them (Soboleva, in Duell 2020). This documentation often happens posthumously, by lesbian biographers keen to ensure that the contribution to art by other lesbians is not lost. Films about living lesbian artists are more often than not shorts, due to lack of finance. There are few films about living lesbian artists where they have the opportunity to discuss their own lives and work at length.

Synopsis

Critically acclaimed artist, Greer Ralston, trained at Glasgow School of Art in the 1980s, and has shown and sold her figurative paintings and other artistic works all over the world. In her documentary, Rachel Dax (Interviewer, Director & Producer) examines the life and work of this exceptional talent, exploring how Ralston's identity as both a woman and a lesbian intersects with and informs her art. Drawing on her vast knowledge of women's art history, Ralston's responses are concurrently informative, fascinating and, at times, surprising.

This expository documentary weaves the history of a lesbian genius' life and work, with responses to her creative output from both her models and patrons, along with a demonstration of her brilliance – as she first sketches and then paints two separate works of art.

Biography

Rachel Smith (AKA Rachel Dax) is a Lecturer in Film at University of South Wales and a University Teacher in Humanities at Cardiff University.





Rachel is an award-winning Writer, Director and Producer of Film and Audio Drama, and also a Novelist. Her research focuses on using Film, Audio Drama and Literature as a method to explore and disseminate knowledge about LGBTQ+ lives, identities, histories and cultures.

Recent credits:

Time & Again (2019) – 28 minute Film starring Dame Siân Phillips & Brigit Forsyth, screened at over 65 festivals and won 15 awards.

In Isolation – A Short Book Of Long Monologues (2020), adapted in 2022–2023 into four 50–60 minute Audio-Dramas.

Greer Ralston – Giving It All To Art (2024) – 61 minute Documentary portrait of a figurative artist.

Three Thousand Lesbians Go To York (2025) – 68 minute collaborative feature Documentary remembering the biggest and longest running Lesbian Arts Festival in the UK.

Bonnie Rae Brickman is a New York-born, London-based Film+TV Editor with over twenty-five years' experience, accumulating a diverse and extensive list of credits across documentary and narrative fiction.

Honoured with four New York Area Emmy Award Certificates during her ten years at WNET/thirteen, PBS' flagship station in NYC, and Highly Commended at Underwire's In The Cut: Best Editor Award for BOOTWMN, Bonnie's work has screened on US, UK, Australian and Canadian television and at film festivals worldwide including Clermont-Ferrand, HotDocs, Open City Doc Fest, London Short Film Festival, Frameline, Outfest, and BFI Flare.

Alongside her editing work, she has taught editing and post-production at SUNY/Oswego, University of West London, and on the Ethnographic & Documentary Film MA programme at UCL.

imdb: www.imdb.com/name/nm0108602/





Workshop 3 – Mapping the Personal History of a Word

Fiona Carey

Abstract

As someone who experiences gender and sexuality as quite fluid, the word lesbian has sometimes been a tricky one for me. Sometimes it feels like an accurate descriptor, sometimes it feels too limiting, sometimes I feel like an imposter for using it. This piece of work grapples with the relationship we have with language, how it helps us understand ourselves better, and when it can become constrictive. In the context of the conference, I would like to have this piece printed on a3/a2 paper, folded like a map for participants. On the reverse, there are prompts to encourage the participant to engage in thinking about the words they use to describe themselves, and to interrogate the relationships they have with those words with the aim of simply engaging in and enjoying the thinking process around language and the self.

Biography:

Fiona Carey is a creative activist, visual artist, designer and researcher who trained at the National College of Art and Design, Dublin and Central Saint Martins, University of the Arts London. She is interested in how creative practices can be used to develop social change, while also being a site of joy for activists.

Workshop 4 – Roundtable on Archives

Red Washburn

City University of York

Giulia Nazzaro

Ghent University

Abstract

This interactive conversation offers a critical reflection on recent efforts in lesbian, queer, and trans history and archiving, merging the scholarly foundations of the archives with practical advice on preserving community knowledge. This roundtable will work directly with participants to answer key questions about archiving for all communities





typically left out of the archives and how archives can build across spaces and communities towards historical solidarity.

The panelists work with the New York City Trans Archives and Lesbian Herstory Archives, the former is only full-service trans-specific archive on the East Coast and the latter is the oldest and biggest collections of lesbian materials in the world. The roundtable will discuss the urgency of community archiving and allyship during the growth of global fascism and the Trump administration. Each panelist will offer their expertise as archivists, historians, activists, organizers, and culture workers to address vital issues about the politics and ethics of community lives and histories. Why and how do groups start archives? How do groups work together in the LGBTQIA+ community? How can archives work to avoid reproducing existing “hierarchies” in history? How do organizers preserve life and history during the crackdown on cultural institutions? Incorporating audience participation, this roundtable will address the urgent questions surrounding lesbian, queer, and trans life and history today.

This roundtable brings together activist-scholars who will help attendees better understand the ethics, politics, and practices of archiving. The participants come from a variety of backgrounds, including feminist studies, lesbian and queer studies, and trans studies in the arts and humanities. The speakers will address the theoretical and cultural background of the archives alongside contentious issues of space and solidarity. In line with the conference theme, community archives is both a struggle and a victory, as archives require continuous work. Incorporating audience participation, the speakers will hold an urgent discussion of the practical and theoretical frameworks necessary for archiving.

Biography:

Dr. Giulia Nazzaro is currently a postdoctoral researcher within the ERC Later-in-life intimacy. Women's unruly practices, spaces and representations project (2023-2025) and is part of the Center for Research in Culture and Gender at the Ghent University. She has extensively investigated the relationships between material culture, art, and space in the emergence of feelings of belonging and home-making practices amongst queer activist communities. She has conducted





extensive fieldwork in Australia and the United States and specializes in qualitative research with an intersectional feminist, queer, and cultural geographical perspective. With a background in photography, she also applies visual anthropological methods to her research investigations. Prior to joining the Department of Language and Culture at Ghent University, she completed her PhD at the Sainsbury Research Unit for the Arts of Africa, Oceania and the Americas (University of East Anglia - UK) in 2019 and worked as a Project Research Officer in the Department of Anthropology at the University of Oxford (2019-2023).

Dr. Red Washburn is a Professor of English and Women's and Gender Studies at the City University of New York. Their book *Irish Women's Prison Writing: Mother Ireland's Rebels, 1960s-2010s* was published by Routledge. Red's articles appear in the *Journal for the Study of Radicalism*, *Women's Studies: An Interdisciplinary Journal*, and *Journal of Lesbian Studies*. Their essays are in several anthologies, including *Theory and Praxis: Women's and Gender Studies at Community Colleges*, *Introduction to Women's, Gender & Sexuality Studies: Interdisciplinary and Intersectional Approaches*, and *Trans Bodies, Trans Selves: A Resource for the Transgender Community*. They are the co-editor of *Sinister Wisdom's Dump Trump: Legacies of Resistance*, *45 Years: A Tribute to Lesbian Herstory Archives*, and *Trans/Feminisms*. *Finishing Line Press* published their poetry collections *Crestview Tree Woman* and *Birch Philosopher X*. They co-edited *WSQ's* issue *Nonbinary*. They received an ACLS/ Mellon fellowship for their next project *Nonbinary: Tr@ns-Forming Gender and Genre in Nonbin@ry Literature, Performance, and Visual Art*.

SATURDAY 16 MAY

Panel 10 – How to Write Lesbian* Lives in Times of Crisis

Panel Abstract

This panel addresses how to write about lesbian lives in the past and present amidst political crises and conflicts. The "how" in this panel's title references the questions and ethical commitments that guide our research, the methods we draw upon in crafting this scholarship, and the





challenges involved in sharing our work publicly. Considering how we write lesbian lives is urgent when LGBTQ+ people are facing virulent political attacks. At the same time, lesbian communities are facing, and have faced, their own internal political battles, which make documenting, writing, and disseminating our work challenging.

Each of the presenters addresses how political crises in the past and present shape how we conduct our research. Lisa L. Moore shares the wide-ranging methods she uses to write about North American lesbian poets in the 1970s and 1980s as divisions emerged among them regarding the politics of sex work, sadomasochism, and gender roles. Amy Tooth Murphy considers how to respectfully and accurately record and publicize the histories of butches and transmasc people in the US and the UK since the 1960s at a moment when they are at great risk of harm. Tamara Chaplin reflects on presenting about French lesbian history at a recent lesbian conference in Toulouse that was riven by conflicts between the event organizers and an anarcho-feminist queer collective. Finally, Lauren Jae Gutterman discusses ethical questions and concerns about publishing her research on the connections between LGBTQ+ people and childhood sexual abuse in US history when we are being pathologized and demonized as “groomers.”

This panel does not seek to provide easy answers, but rather to open up questions and foster discussion among participants about the stakes of writing about, through, and despite political divisions among and political attacks on LGBTQ+ people.

Solidarity with All Lesbians, Or Else

Tamara Chaplin

University of Illinois at Urbana-Champaign / Université de Paris Panthéon-Assas

Abstract

Last spring, Toulouse’s 26th annual Printemps Lesbian [Lesbian Spring] was almost shut down by a vicious conflict between Bagarre, a French anarcho-feminist queer collective, and the festival’s founders, an organization known as Bagdam. As scholars and filmmakers who have examined Bagdam’s history (*Chaplin, Becoming Lesbian: A Queer History of Modern France* and *Chaplin and Olivia Pedroso, Toulouse Lesbopolis:*





une utopie du present), my colleague and I were invited to present at the festival. We thus found ourselves in the midst of a political flashpoint with serious consequences for the production, preservation, and transmission of lesbian history and culture.

Bagdam has been at the forefront of battles for lesbian visibility and rights in France since the late 1980s. And yet, Bagarre accused Bagdam's founders of lesbophobia, transphobia, transmisogyny, Zionism, Islamophobia, and "putophobia" [being anti-sex worker]. After further denouncing Bagdam for organizing "un printemps lesbophobe" [a Lesbophobic Spring], and calling for "SOLIDARITY WITH ALL [real] LESBIANS, OR ELSE!", Bagarre targeted festival events; many were cancelled to avoid violence. This episode brought into high relief battles fracturing queer communities today. My paper for Lesbian Lives 2026, "Solidarity with All Lesbians, Or Else" will attempt to describe this conflict and explain its larger stakes.

Biography

Tamara Chaplin is Professor of Modern European History and Lynn M. Martin Professorial Scholar at the University of Illinois at Urbana-Champaign and Associate Researcher at the Université de Paris, Panthéon-Assas. A French historian of sexuality and media, she works on queer identities, social justice, war, and human rights. Chaplin's latest book is *Becoming Lesbian: A Queer History of Modern France* (U Chicago Press, 2024). A film based on the book is under development.

'We Were Never Meant to Survive': LGBTQ+ Histories of Childhood Sexual Abuse

Lauren Jae Gutterman

University of Texas at Austin

Abstract

My current book project, "Queer Survival: Gender, Sexuality, and the History of Childhood Sexual Abuse," traces the cultural, political, and intellectual connections between gender and sexual nonconformity and surviving childhood sexual abuse in the US from the late-nineteenth century to the present. The book uncovers the origins of the idea that childhood sexual harm causes homosexuality and gender nonconformity and shows why this idea continues to matter so much. In doing so, "Queer





Survival” shows how LGBTQ+ people have been overrepresented within struggles against and testimonies about childhood sexual abuse, most visibly with regard to lesbian feminist leadership in the incest survivors’ movement of the 1970s and 1980s.

While my work helps to historically contextualize our current political moment, sharing this research with broad public audiences feels risky when stereotypes about LGBTQ+ people as child sexual predators are rampant, LGBTQ+ rights are under siege, and trans identity is being depicted as a form of mental illness. The LGBTQ+ lives I trace could easily be misinterpreted and taken as evidence that LGBTQ+ identity is caused by childhood sexual abuse, further justifying a newly ascendant movement to promote sexual and gender conversion therapies, especially for minors.

Biography

Lauren Jae Gutterman is Associate Professor of American Studies and Women’s, Gender and Sexuality Studies and Chair of American Studies at the University of Texas at Austin. She is the author of *Her Neighbor’s Wife: A History of Lesbian Desire Within Marriage* (U Penn Press, 2020), which won the Berkshire Conference of Women Historians Book Prize. She recently co-edited a special issue of *GLQ: A Journal of Lesbian and Gay Studies* on “Queering the Domestic.”

How Lesbians Saved Poetry: Creative and Critical Methods for Writing Lesbian Lives

Lisa L. Moore

University of Texas at Austin

Abstract

In this talk, I describe the mixed methods of my forthcoming book, a hybrid of literary criticism, personal narrative, interviews, poems, and graphic visualizations. In the 1970s and 80s, lesbian poets picked up a longstanding debate about the politics of the sonnet form from Black poets, who were being challenged to drop received forms, perceived as artifacts and instruments of a racist literary canon. At the same time, lesbian feminist communities were practicing new forms of “speaking out” about domestic violence, rape, racism, sex between women,





menstruation and childbirth—experiences that had rarely been represented in literature.

At consciousness-raising groups across North America, women were encouraged to “break the silence” around these secret experiences, often by writing their first poems. A surge of new periodicals and presses, bookstores and reading series, floated these writings into the earliest women’s, gender, and queer studies classrooms on college campuses. An intellectual and political conflict dubbed the “feminist sex wars” erupted around some of the experiences—somasochism, queer sex, sex work, butch-femme roles—now being championed without shame as new forms of freedom.

Biography

Lisa L. Moore is Archibald A. Hill Professor of English and Professor and Chair of the Department of Women’s, Gender, and Sexuality Studies at The University of Texas at Austin. Lisa is the author of *Sister Arts: The Erotics of Lesbian Landscapes* (Lambda Literary Award) and the poetry chapbook *24 Hours of Men*, among other works. Her creative-critical hybrid volume, *How Lesbians Saved Poetry*, is forthcoming from SUNY Press in 2026.

Re/representing Butches: Putting Butch and Transmasc Lives on the Page

Amy Tooth Murphy

Royal Holloway, University of London

Abstract

As an oral historian, my job entails eliciting, listening to, recording, and writing about the intimate details of my narrators’ lives. As I begin writing my current project, *Historicising Butch: Narrating Butch Identity and Lived Experience, 1960 – Present*, I find myself, more than ever, gripped by questions of representation, ethics, and my duty of care to my narrators, and to the community of butches, former butches and masculine-of-centre people that this research speaks to.

As a proud butch myself, my own positionality has been key to the research process. Having conducted c.50 interviews across the UK and US, I am now faced with the blank page and the responsibility of writing





about these lives. Will my narrators recognise themselves as I present them? Will they take issue with how they appear? Will the work speak to butches and the people who love them? And, most urgent of all, what does it mean to share the intimate inner lives of butches and transmasculine people at a time of right-wing ascendancy and the weaponisation of butch and transmasculine bodies?

Biography

Amy Tooth Murphy is Senior Lecturer in Oral History at Royal Holloway, University of London, where she specialises in queer oral history. Her research interests include post-war lesbian history, butch/femme identities and culture, and queer temporalities. She is a Founder and Co-editor of the peer-reviewed blog *Notches: (re)marks on the history of sexuality*, and a Trustee of the Oral History Society. She is currently completing her British Academy/Leverhulme-funded monograph project *Historicising Butch: Narrating Butch Lesbian Identity, 1950–Present*.

Panel 11 – Radical Activism

Reclaiming Radicalism – Healing infighting and transphobia through intergenerational collective care

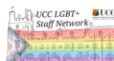
K. A. Harper

Goldsmiths University

Abstract

With the rise of transphobia causing huge divides outside of and within queer communities, how can we resist the false narratives of generational divides and move towards compassion, conversation and understanding? How can we reclaim, remember and return to the lesbian movements of the 70s and 80s, which modelled trans-inclusivity, as a guiding light and reminder that the rhetoric pulling focus from lesbian their/her-stories of intersectional solidarity movements isn't the story we should be centring?

With examples from their communities in London of intersectional queer projects, working groups and spaces, K.A Harper brings focus to building intergenerational queer networks and chosen family units as a reclamation of 'radicalism', a term co-opted by transphobic hate groups and gender-critical feminists. Questioning whether it'll ever be possible to build bridges with those seeking to denounce and erase our trans





siblings, they speculate on methods of healing amid the noise and grief of the socio-political moment we find ourselves in.

Biography

K.A Harper is a trans-disciplinary artist, performer and access worker based in London. Creating work spanning music, photography, drag, writing and performance, their practice looks at marginalised histories from an auto-ethnographic, embodied queer lens. Harper's work has been showcased at international conferences in the U.S, U.K and Amsterdam, and they're currently a resident artist at Triangle LGBTQ+ Cultural Centre in Deptford where they sing regularly. K.A is a member of the National Maritime Museums' Queer History Club, which birthed their project 'Attitudes' – a re/discovery, an/archive and que(e)r(y)ing of Lady Emma Hamilton, in which they draw on their embodied experience as a working-class, AFAB life model and musician by paying homage and reframing the patriarchal/kyriarchal gaze through multi-modal performance. They're currently completing their MA Queer History dissertation entitled: "Freakuencies & Kinterventions: Exploring Pete and Lynne Burns' Queer Nonconformity in Liverpool's post-punk scene through creative praxis" at Goldsmiths.

"Free Sharon Kowalski!" A Dialogue About Lesbian Activism and History in the 1980s–1990s

Felicia Kornbluh

University of Vermont

Carolyn Weathers

ONE Archives, University of Southern California

Abstract

Kornbluh and Weathers will discuss the Free Sharon Kowalski movement in the 1980s, which succeeded in getting a state appellate court to recognize a lesbian relationship as a "family of affinity, which ought to be accorded respect." In making the case of Kowalski and her lover, Karen Thompson, ubiquitous in LGBT+ and disabled circles, the Free Sharon campaign was key to laying the groundwork for the movement for marriage equality.

The story began with a car accident that left Kowalski with physical and





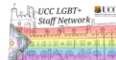
cognitive injuries. Kowalski's father, Donald, became her legal guardian, with complete control over her medical treatment. Donald Kowalski removed his daughter from a nursing facility where she was receiving top-of-the-line rehabilitative care, and he forbade her lover, Karen Thompson, from visiting the woman with whom she had shared her life for six years.

Our paper (or, really, dialogue), will explore the movement – a leading example of lesbian feminist power that has never before received serious attention from historians or writers. We will discuss:

1. How activists in local chapters, such as the Los Angeles one led by Weathers and Jenny Wrenn, were inspired by the tribulations of Kowalski and Thompson, and how they created their groups.
2. How they organized, drawing on feminist, lesbian, and disability networks. Among the institutions that helped activists share information were feminist publishing houses, such as Weathers' and Wrenn's lesbian-feminist Clothespin Fever Press; feminist, disability-oriented, and lesbian newspapers; and women's bookstores.
3. The alliances that were built within the movement, between the disability and lesbian communities, and in the intersectional space occupied by disabled lesbians, and those between the Free Sharon movement (mostly lesbians) and activists fighting for and with people with AIDS/HIV (largely gay men).

Biography

Felicia Kornbluh (she/they) is a writer, professor, and activist. Her most recent book is *A Woman's Life Is a Human Life: My Mother, Our Neighbor, and the Journey from Reproductive Rights to Reproductive Justice* (Grove Press, 2023). Kornbluh is co-editor of the forthcoming symposium, "Queer U.S. Constitutional History," in the *Journal of American Constitutional History* and co-organizer of a conference on Queer Legal History at the American Society for Legal History meeting in November, 2025. Kornbluh publishes in *Ms.com*; *The American Prospect*; *The New York Review of Books*; *Journal of American History*; *New York Times Book Review*; *Time.com*; and *The Forward*. They are the Martin Duberman Visiting Scholar at the New York Public Library for 2025–26. Carolyn Weathers is a librarian, activist, and collaborator with the LGBT+ archive, the ONE Institute at the University of Southern California. An alum of the historic Biltmore Invasion, during which the Gay Liberation Front of Los Angeles confronted members of the American Psychiatric Association over their designation of homosexuality as a mental illness,





Weathers also founded, with her partner at the time, artist Jenny Wrenn, the lesbian feminist publishing house Clothespin Fever Press. In 1987, after learning about the Sharon Kowalski case at the national March on Washington for Lesbian, Gay, and Bisexual Liberation, Weathers and Wrenn founded the Free Sharon Kowalski Committee of Los Angeles.

A Path towards a Dyke Anticapitalism

Nicole Chrenek

Royal Holloway, University of London

Abstract

In the past decade, corporations have shown increasing interest in lesbians – or, rather, their money. With same-sex relationships becoming more acceptable to heterosexual society, brands have demonstrated increasing willingness to advertise to dykes under the guise of “inclusivity.” Brands do not limit themselves to Pride events – they have also begun sponsoring events ranging from nights out in Clapham to hiking retreats in Bali.

Corporate sponsorships of lesbian events present a danger to the lesbian archive for two main reasons: firstly, potential archival material is being overtaken by that produced by brands, rather than dykes. Secondly, when lesbians are no longer of interest to the market, what happens to lesbian events when we have been relying on corporations to host them for us? When corporations withdraw their sponsorship, we’re left with a community of dykes with no Pride and no events to attend, and no idea where to start.

My paper presents suggestions for a path towards a dyke anticapitalism, which I consider to be the only solution to a rapidly all-engrossing rainbow capitalism that threatens lesbian community. I explore alternatives to corporate-branded lesbian events that allow for the construction of a lesbian community that will be capable of surviving the rise and predictable fall of rainbow capitalism.

Biography

Nicole Chrenek is a PhD student at Royal Holloway, University of London, writing their dissertation under the supervision of Professor Prudence Chamberlain. Their research focuses on lesbian anxieties as they are depicted in twentieth-century literature, and how these anxieties are a





product of existing in a vastly heterosexual society. They have previously presented at Lesbian Lives 2025, and their work can additionally be found in *Surely Magazine*, *Weird Era*, *Figures of Freedom: Representations of Agency in a Time of Crisis*, and others.

Panel 12 – Access All Areas

Crip & Lesbian Futures: Reimagining the Human Rights of Persons with Disabilities.

Carla M. Reale

University of Trento

Ilaria Todde

EL*C – EuroCentralAsian Lesbian* Community

Abstract

Lesbian, bisexual, queer (LBQ) women and non-binary (NB) persons with disabilities experience intersecting oppressions: sexism, lesbophobia, ableism, and heteronormativity, that are often invisible to law and policy. The report presented here will examine how the UN Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities (CRPD) can be reinterpreted to address these layered inequalities. Drawing on Crip Theory and Feminist Disability Theory, the analysis bridges cultural and sociological insights with legal scholarship, offering a critical, intersectional perspective on human rights, highlighting how specific CRPD articles can be understood to protect LBQ and NB persons with disabilities. The research pursues three objectives. First, it maps literature, jurisprudence, and CRPD Committee decisions to identify potentials and gaps in addressing LBQ women and NB persons with disabilities. Second, it develops an intersectional legal analysis, proposing expanded interpretations to key CRPD articles. Third, it generates qualitative data through stakeholder interviews and community validation focus groups, embedding lived experience into legal analysis and advocacy outcomes. This presentation will discuss specifically the most relevant CRPD articles. General provisions such as Art. 5 (Equality) and Art. 6 (Women with Disabilities), provide entry points for integrating sexual and gender diversity into disability rights frameworks. While Articles on violence (16), family life (23), and health (25), reveal urgent gaps: LBQ and NB persons with disabilities often experience heightened vulnerability and specific





forms of discriminations. By centering these provisions, the research interrogates how the CRPD can better safeguard self-determination, bodily autonomy, family rights, and protection from violence.

By combining crip, lesbian, and intersectional perspectives with a strong theoretical foundation, this research challenges conventional human rights frameworks. It advances a nuanced application of CRPD provisions capable of embracing lesbian crips' lives, ensuring equality, protection, and recognition.

Biography

Carla M. Reale (PhD) is a socio-legal researcher and transfeminist activist. Their interdisciplinary research examines how law engages with material bodies, complex identities, and equality. She holds several teaching duties in Italian universities, serves as a selected SOGIESC expert at the Council of Europe, and works as a research consultant for NGOs. They are a board member at the Centre for Interdisciplinary Gender Studies, University of Trento.

Ilaria Todde is Advocacy and Research Director (“Dykerektor”) at ELC – EuroCentralAsian Lesbian Community, where she leads policy, research, and advocacy initiatives at European and international level. She has extensive experience in EU institutions and has been central to developing EL*C’s lesbian advocacy programme, the Observatory on Lesbophobia and the organisation’s intersectional research projects. An activist from Sardinia, Ilaria brings the perspective of a butch lesbian shaped by rural, traditional contexts, whose lifelong engagement in feminist and LGBTI struggles continues to ground and inspire her professional work.

Reframing HIV Vulnerability” Tawsif Hossain (Bandhu Social Welfare Society; Pioneering Health Research and Learning Center)

Tawsif Hossain

Bandhu Social Welfare Society

Abstract

HIV prevention and research have historically centered on men who have sex with men (MSM), leading to the marginalization of other sexual minorities, particularly lesbian, bisexual, and queer (LBQ) women and women partners of bisexual men. This limited focus has resulted in significant data gaps, misinformed risk assessments, and exclusion from policies and services tailored to their specific needs. Despite growing



evidence that LBQ women face unique HIV vulnerabilities including sexual violence, bisexual concurrency, stigma, and lack of access to inclusive healthcare, they remain largely invisible in the global HIV response.

This study critically examines how dominant HIV discourse, policy, and programming have contributed to this exclusion. Using a qualitative research design grounded in intersectional and feminist frameworks, the study employs secondary data analysis as its primary method. It involves a comprehensive content and critical discourse analysis of peer reviewed literature, national HIV strategies, and global health reports from the past two decades, including those published by UNAIDS and the World Health Organization. By analyzing language, representation, and institutional priorities, the study identifies structural barriers that hinder access to HIV prevention and care for LBQ women and other non MSM populations.

Drawing from existing qualitative research and insights from community led organizations, the study aims to reframe HIV vulnerability as a multidimensional issue that requires inclusive and equity driven approaches. Its findings will provide evidence based recommendations to inform more inclusive health policies and interventions, ultimately promoting equitable access to care for all sexual minorities, especially those historically overlooked in HIV discourse.

Biography

As a double Master's graduate in Microbiology and Development Studies, I bridge petri dishes and policy papers with equal flair. Currently working with Bandhu Social Welfare Society and the Pioneering Health Research and Learning Center, my research and advocacy revolve around LGBTQIA plus rights, mental health, and social justice, with a focus on highlighting the vibrant and complex lives of queer communities in Bangladesh. With experience ranging from field research with UNICEF and the World Bank to facilitating workshops on gender and sexuality, I believe in blending science, storytelling, and social change. Outside of work, I am a stage performer, poetry reciter, and a proud voice of alternative narratives. I am excited to contribute to Lesbian Life and Living, because in every culture, queer stories deserve a front row seat and a microphone.





Womxn and Access to Football: Queer-Feminist Practices,

Suzi Andreis

Chrzaszczyki Sports Club, Warsaw

Abstract

In “Womxn and Access to Football: Queer-Feminist Practices,” I explore how gender and sexuality shape access to football—both through existing barriers and through grassroots, community-based strategies of resistance. My reflection begins with Jafar Panahi’s film *Offside* (2006), which for me symbolizes queer and womxn’s experiences in football: being confined to the margins yet constantly creating our own spaces of play, resistance, and belonging.

I draw on my personal experience as a queer, lesbian player and sports activist who returned to the field as an adult and became involved in building the LBT+ football movement in Poland. I describe the creation and development of the Womxn’s Football Academy (K*AP)—the first open and free football school for adult FLINTA individuals. For me, the Academy embodies a queer-feminist sporting practice grounded in inclusivity, equality, and mutual care.

I approach sport as a space of activism, self-organization, and everyday resistance to exclusion—where queer and lesbian communities reclaim visibility and redefine what it means to play, to belong, and to take up space. Through this lens, I show how queer-feminist practice can transform access to football and how, by playing together, we can collectively reshape the social meanings of the game itself.

Biography

I’m a feminist-queer sports activist and co-founder of Chrzaszczyki Sports Club — the first LBT+ sports club in Poland. Through this club, I’ve led numerous initiatives and events to make sports, especially football/soccer, more accessible for people facing cultural and social barriers. One of the key projects I helped create is the Womxn’s Football Academy — a football school for FLINTA individuals that has been running since 2012.

Beyond sports, I’m also engaged in queer-feminist grassroots movements, including co-organizing Warsaw’s Womxn’s Day Manifa.

I also express myself through photography, documenting community events and street protests.

Film Screening:





“Free Beer Tomorrow”

Julia M. Applegate

LuSter P Singleton

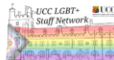
Film

Synopsis

In the aftermath of the Stonewall Riots, a Columbus neighborhood watering hole transitioned from a go-go bar to a safe haven for 5 generations of lesbians. The film asks attendees to travel back in time with the lesbians who made it happen in this heartwarming, inspirational and culturally historic documentary. Free Beer Tomorrow is an explicitly collaborative project. Our/Feminist, in this case, specifically Lesbian mental health, physical safety, cultural expression are under attack. Book bans, public policy initiatives, mass shootings conspire to eliminate recently earned freedoms (marriage, self-identification on legal documents, free gender expression). Our filmmaking / community building strategies are rooted in collective consciousness and anti-racist approaches to storytelling. FREE BEER TOMORROW preserves a cache of herstories that were at severe risk of being lost. We've hosted public fundraising and informational events, to keep the community/patrons/owner involved and engaged. In the process of working on the project, we built community. We realized the interview process, the public storytelling events, talks at universities, churches and intergenerational meet-ups helped to combat social isolation amongst lesbian/queer women. Furthermore, these events led to an unexpected collaboration with public health researchers at The Ohio State University. And, in this capacity we've conducted a research study to examine the impact of the loss of lesbian spaces on the social and emotional well-being of lesbians/queer females and non-binary folk over 50. We are certain, given our relationship to the bar, its patrons and herstory, we were uniquely situated to collect and preserve the existence of this community. As the current administration tries to disappear 'us.' We'd like to share our process, provide concrete tips to encourage others towards work that takes 'care of our own.'

Biography

Julie and I, are long time co-conspirators. Our friendship & artistic collaborations were birthed in the bar. From drag king shows, live music production, art installations, creation of an international drag king conference, and lesbian bingo, the bar has been a fixture in our artistic





expression for 30 years. Our work is informed by / builds upon queer and people of color activism and community engaged cultural production. We both are Ohio River Appalachian. Opposites in terms of racial identity, we both grew up in lower class families with strong, storytelling matriarchs. Raised with religious influences. Came out as queer at a young age. Both experiencing rejection from our families of origin. These formative childhood experiences left us, with a strong desire to nourish BIPOC and Queer communities. Our work has never strayed from that ethic and connection to community is a central component of the Free Beer Tomorrow project.

LuSter P Singleton


A graduate of The Ohio State University and holds a Master's and Bachelors of Arts degree in Women's Studies. They are fascinated by the intersections of '-isms.' He has a 40-year reputation as an internationally renowned gender performer, events producer, national award-winning keynote speaker and storyteller, community activist, and archivist. In the performance world, they are best known for their gender-bending portrayals as show host extraordinaires, Luster Dela V. and the titillating Lustivious Dela Virgion (Vir-g-own). He is the co-founder and visionary of the nationally and internationally acclaimed drag king troupe, H.I.S.

KINGS, and IDKE (The International Drag King Extravaganza), originating from Columbus, OH. Currently, they are co-producing and directing Free Beer Tomorrow, a documentary about Ohio's longest-running lesbian-owned and lesbian-centered bar, Jack's/Summit Station. LuSter is also venturing into children's literature with Prince Kevil, Soon to Be King (as he liked to be called)—the first book in a forthcoming series.

Julia M. Applegate

Masculine Drag Performer/Producer, Film Director and Producer, Masculine Drag Historian, DJ. Ms. Applegate holds a Master of Arts in Women's, Gender and Sexuality Studies and a Master of Public Health, both from The Ohio State University. Julia was a founding member of H.I.S. Kings (1996) the International Drag King Community Extravaganza (1999) and the Royal Renegades (2001). As an artist she has produced audio and video stories for public radio, conducted workshops for adults, youth at Wexner Center for the Arts and at healing retreats for people living with HIV.





Additionally, she has been an HIV and LGBTQ+ health advocate, researcher and administrator for the past 22 years. She has taught Women's Gender and Sexuality Studies classes at Ohio State, Wright State University and Ohio University since 1996. Presently Julia is Directing and Producing a documentary film about Ohio's longest running lesbian owned and operated bar.

Workshop 5 – Love is Love – but what do we do when things go wrong?

Angela O'Connell, OSS Cork Domestic Violence Information Resource Centre, and Soph Eales-White, LINQ Ireland.

Abstract

"Love is Love" was a popular slogan in the Marriage Equality Referendum campaign, and indeed there are many similarities between heterosexual intimate relationships and those in the LBQ+ community. However, there are some important differences in what we bring into our relationships, how we behave in them, and what we do when we experience abuse or violence. This facilitated workshop will explore these topics in a safe and inclusive space, allowing an exchange of ideas and knowledge between everyone present, scholars and community members, survivors or not. The workshop is not recommended for anyone who has experienced intimate partner abuse in the past couple of years.

Biography

Angela is a Development Worker with OSS Cork Domestic Violence Information Resource Centre researching intimate partner abuse in the LGBTQI+ community. She holds a Masters and PhD in Women's Studies on the subject of lesbian family formation in Ireland, and has a background in academic and community development research specialising in children's rights, gender equality and LGBTQI+ issues. She is a proud lesbian mum of four sons, a dog and two cats (of course).

Soph Eales-White - (they/them) is a queer community advocate focused on inclusion, community building, and social justice. Since 2024, they have worked as the Community Health Worker at LINQ Ireland, supporting LBTQ+ people through outreach, training and compassionate





care. Soph holds an MSc in International Social and Public Policy and an MA in Economics, with academic research focusing on mental health inequalities, social capital, and the role of community action.

Workshop 6 – Bender. A co-created archive

Toma McCullim

Abstract

I lived at Greenham Common Women’s Peace Camp from 1982–84. This bender is my story: a shelter, a bed, a political home made from branches, plastic bags, rope, blankets, mud, smoke, breath, and bodies. It is where the big, politics came inside. Where we slept, fucked, loved, argued, whispered, drank tea, made plans, became dykes, grew ourselves. For Lesbian Lives, I bring the bender to UCC as an alive archive and story-gathering space. Participants will co-create this living space throughout the day. Come inside the personal in the political. Share, create, lie down and dream.

Biography

Toma McCullim is an artist who describes herself as an Artist—an activist artist. Her work is driven by a deep commitment to social justice and environmental ecology, and centres on participatory practices that empower collaborators to amplify their own authentic voices. Trained as an anthropologist of art, Toma’s practice is grounded in lived experience, collective process, and care-led methodologies. She is particularly interested in the fundamental question: what does art do? Working across walking, gathering, storytelling, and co-creation, her projects operate as catalysts for connection, reflection, and action, stimulating creative change-making at individual, communal, and ecological levels.

Panel 13 – Advocacy, Academia and Policy

Lesbian Knowledge Hub: Building Synergies Between Advocacy, Academia, and Policy

Ilaria Todde

EL*C – EuroCentralAsian Lesbian* Community

Abstract

Lesbians remain strikingly underrepresented in research, policy, and funding frameworks. While feminist and queer scholarship has flourished





over the past decades, lesbian-specific questions are often subsumed under broader LGBTIQ or gender categories, leaving crucial realities unexamined and unresourced. This lack of visibility in academia directly impacts advocacy and policymaking, as evidence gaps perpetuate marginalisation and weaken the case for targeted support. This interactive workshop proposes the starting discussion for the creation of a Lesbian Knowledge Hub – an academic and activist circle designed to bridge scholarship, advocacy, and policy engagement. The aim is threefold:

1. Build synergies among academics, advocates, and activists to jointly develop funding proposals and collaborative projects;
2. Mobilise researchers strategically when their expertise can strengthen advocacy, ensuring policy efforts to include lesbian issues are backed by timely and credible evidence;
3. Create momentum both inside and outside academia to mobilise networks and resources for lesbian research.

The 90-minute session will invite participants to reflect on the structural causes of lesbian invisibility in academia, share experiences of navigating research and advocacy spaces, and collectively identify strategies to embed lesbian-specific knowledge in institutional agendas. Participants will also be invited to consider how EL*C (EuroCentralAsian Lesbian* Community), can nurture and sustain this hub, as a network of activists and researchers, ensuring continuity and impact. By connecting research production with advocacy goals and policy needs, this workshop seeks to open a space for sustained collaboration that challenges lesbian erasure in knowledge-making and in policy-making. It aims not only to map existing barriers but also to lay the groundwork for a community-driven academic circle that strengthens lesbian futures across disciplines, movements, and institutions.

Biography

Ilaria Todde is Advocacy and Research Director (“Dykerector”) at EL*C – EuroCentralAsian Lesbian* Community, where she leads policy, research, and advocacy initiatives at European and international level. She has extensive experience in EU institutions and has been central to developing EL*C’s lesbian advocacy programme, the Observatory on Lesbophobia and the organisation’s intersectional research projects. An activist from Sardinia, Ilaria brings the perspective of a butch lesbian shaped by rural, traditional contexts, whose lifelong engagement in





feminist and LGBTI struggles continues to ground and inspire her professional work.

Sexual Minority (LGBQ+) Women's Experiences of Drug and Alcohol Addiction: a qualitative study

Miriam Hillyard

King's College London

Abstract


Introduction: Lesbian, gay, bisexual and queer (sexual minority) women experience significant health inequities in comparison with heterosexual women. Both drug and alcohol use, and addiction to drugs and alcohol, are more prevalent for this group. There are multiple potential explanatory mechanisms for this, including minority stress, trauma, and the positive role of drugs/alcohol in building identity and community connection. We aimed to understand how sexual minority women experience the intersection of their identities with addiction problems, and how they explain their journeys into/out of addiction.

Methods: A qualitative study informed by constructivist grounded theory methods was performed. 21 semi-structured telephone interviews were conducted by the lead author, who is a queer woman. Participants were self-identified sexual minority women, who all had experience of harmful or dependent use of drugs and/or alcohol. Interviews were transcribed and coded using NVivo software.

Results: A diverse group of sexual minority women (including cisgender and transgender women) were recruited. Participants used a range of terms to describe their sexuality, including bisexual (n=10), lesbian or gay woman (n=6), pansexual (n=4), queer (n=4), polyamorous (n=1), and 'no label' (n=1). Significant themes from the interviews included: 1. Using drugs/alcohol for social bonding or 'finding a place within society', 2. Experiencing joy, fun, and pleasure, 3. Self-destruction or 'suicide by stealth', 4. Experiencing rejection, alienation, or shame, and 5. Coping with discrimination and homophobia.

Discussion: Sexual minority women described a multitude of complex narratives around drug and alcohol addiction. There was often a 'symbiotic' or enmeshed relationship between minority sexuality and drug/alcohol use, in both positive and negative ways. This research helps to shift the conversation away from traditional public health narratives





focusing on risks and dangers for this group, towards a more nuanced understanding of lived realities.

Biography

Dr. Miriam Hillyard is currently an MRC Addiction Research Clinical Fellow at the National Addiction Centre, King's College London, UK. Her research focuses on the experiences of sexual minority women with drug and/or alcohol problems. She graduated in Medicine (BM BCh) from the University of Oxford, and Epidemiology (MSc) from the London School of Hygiene and Tropical Medicine. She is also a qualified psychosexual and relationship therapist (RegCOSRT).

Trans Feminist Epistemologies in the US Second Wave (Book Talk)

Emily Cousens

Northeastern University London

Abstract

In 2023, Dr Em Cousens published their book - *Trans Feminist Epistemologies in the US Second Wave*. By revisiting the contributions of trans+ individuals writing in underground print publications, as well as the more well-known arguments of Andrea Dworkin, this book demonstrated that valuable yet overlooked trans feminist philosophies of sex and gender were present throughout the US second wave. This talk discusses the key contributions from this book, as well as subsequent research Dr Cousens has been undertaking into the archives of sex and gender in the UK. The talk will also put forward the concept of "hatching" as a new hermeneutic strategy for reading trans+ periodicals from the second half of the 20th century - which disproportionately comprise the available archive of trans+ history, and which can present as decidedly ambivalent texts.

Biography

Dr Emily Cousens (They/Them) is Assistant Professor of Politics and International Relations at Northeastern University, London and the UK Lead for the Digital Transgender Archive. They are the author of *Trans Feminist Epistemologies in the US Second Wave*, published by Palgrave in 2023, and have published widely across the fields of trans feminist philosophy and history.





Telling our Story: Engaging Narrative to Support Trans-Affirming Care in US University Health and Counseling Centers

Dr. Rachel E. Gartner

University College Cork

Abstract

We plan to share the process and product of a community engaged intervention development project designed to increase university health and counseling center (UHC) capacity to support trans and gender diverse students (TGDS) relating to sexual violence (SV) and substance use (SU). Not only do TGD university students experience much higher rates of sexual violence than their cisgender peers, they also are less likely to access campus support resources and more likely to report distrust of UHCs. We built a training to increase provider trustworthiness by capitalizing on narrative communication which has been theorized to promote changes in behavior, attitudes, and motivation in health care settings⁵⁻⁶. We uniquely capitalized on the power of narrative to build provider understanding of, empathy toward, and knowledge about TGDS health care experiences. Utilizing human centered design practices, a problem-solving approach that centers the needs and perspectives of collaborators, we worked with a community collaborative comprised of TGD undergraduate students (n=5), UHC physicians and counselors (n=4), and community providers (n=4). Through this work, narrative was identified as key to change.

We engaged in interviews (n=14) with TGD students and providers to build a series of short videos on topics of critical importance to TGD student health (e.g., gender euphoria, importance of names and pronouns, harm reduction). From this, we developed an e-learning training for UHC providers that engage the stories and perspectives of TGD students, providers, and community members. The current presentation will walk participants through our process for developing the videos and will discuss the impact that they have had on the training. We will share videos, lessons learned in our process, and preliminary outcomes of our feasibility trial.

Biography





Rachel E. Gartner, PhD, MSW is a Lecturer in the School of Applied Social Studies, University College Cork. Her research investigates the role of violence and discrimination across individual, interpersonal, and systemic factors with the goal of capacitating systems to better meet the needs of minoritized young people. She is a social worker and critical queer scholar who centers community engagement and co-design at all stages of the research process.

Panel 14 – Making Community and Forging Solidarity

Sparks of Joy: Using Queer Methods to Imagine Otherwise and Build Solidarity

Jennifer Fraser

University of Westminster

Francis Ray White

University of Westminster

Abstract

The Non-Binary Genders in Higher Education Project (nbinhe) is a collaboration between the University of Westminster and City, University of London that aims to create the conditions for non-binary students and staff to thrive in Higher Education (HE). Our project is the first of its kind in the UK to work with non-binary students and staff to understand the specific issues they face in navigating HE and how these may be different from the larger umbrella of trans or LGBTQ people. While gathering data to use in our efforts to influence policy makers and HE institutions is a foundational part of the project, an equally important part of our work is to dream new possibilities into being alongside other non-binary students and staff.

Our project sits alongside and in conversation with queer and decolonial re-imaginings of HE that imagine how the university could be otherwise (Bell, 2018; brown, 2017; Green, 2019; Ortiz, 2023; Stein, 2018; Stein et al., 2021); not just a space that ‘includes’ ‘others’, but one that never others in the first place.

In this paper we discuss how we have been using creative focus groups to reimagine the university. By focussing on our methodological approach and our queer feminist ethics of care we will consider how we can work collaboratively with participants as a strategy for creating





radical social transformation. In this way, our project moves beyond the boundaries of HE to engage in discussions about feminist care and queer solidarity building more broadly.

Biography

Jennifer Fraser is University Director of Student Partnership and Principal Lecturer in Social Sciences at the University of Westminster. Jennifer works in the areas of critical higher education studies and gender studies.

Francis Ray White is Reader in Sociology in the School of Social Sciences at the University of Westminster. Francis Ray works on gender in relation to fat, trans, non-binary and queer embodiment.

The Masters Tools; a sectoral exploration of the impact of philanthropy on queer community development in Ireland

Ciara Mulcahy Linehan

LINQ

Abstract

This paper dives into the tense intersection of philanthropic wealth and queer community development in Ireland, wielding Foucault's theory of governmentality as a lens to expose the power dynamics at play. It demands we ask: Can philanthropy ever be democratic? Or does it, by design, privilege the palatable over the radical, the assimilationist over the revolutionary?

At its core, this research interrogates whether funders shape queer liberation to fit hegemonic ideals, sidelining intersectional, unapologetic, or "unpalatable" approaches, modes of resistance, identities or people and if philanthropy rewards conformity, how can we democratically leverage it to create queer-appropriate spaces or fund essential services?

The queer body has long been a site of resistance, willingly or unwillingly, so what happens when that resistance is bankrolled by the very systems it seeks to dismantle? This research explores whether this legacy of resistance risks being diluted. If philanthropy rewards assimilation, can we truly believe the revolution will be funded?

Biography

Ciara Mulcahy Linehan works in Sexual Violence and Harassment





Prevention at MTU, where she focuses on survivor-centred support, DSGBV prevention, policy development, and education and training for staff and students. Grounded in gender studies and queer theory, her work challenges power relations and aims to drive cultural change in higher education. Her research has explored the experiences of young women in sport, with further collaborations focusing on queer women's sexual and reproductive health and intersectionality in queer community settings. She holds an MA in Women's Studies (UCC), where she examined the inclusion of trans women in Irish feminism, and is currently a PhD candidate in UCC's DSocS programme where her research explores philanthropy, capitalism and the inherent power dynamics in funding relationship with queer community development. With experience in community health through LINQ Ireland and a background in Community Development (BA, MTU) and Communications (BAH, DCU), her work bridges theory and lived experience leading to advocacy that is deeply rooted in dismantling systemic barriers.

Queer home and queer lineage in *Lesvia*

Michela Baldo

University of Birmingham

Abstract

My presentation aims to analyse the documentary *Lesvia* by Tzeli Hadjimitsiou (2024), in which I took part as interviewee, through the lens of queer kinship studies. The documentary narrates the stories of lesbians who have been gathering from around the world in the small farming village of Eressos on the island of Lesbos since the 1970s. Drawing on queer kinship's concepts of community and relationality (Bradway and Freeman 2022) and on the notion of queer lineage (Ryan-Flood 2024), I will examine two important topics discussed in the film: family/home and lesbian history/cross-generational connections. Regarding the former, the documentary portrays Eressos as a chosen (Weston 1995) queer diasporic family for many lesbians who keep returning there every year or have moved there, managing to create a sustained community. Regarding the latter, it shows the importance of finding a queer lineage, defined by Ryan-Flood (2024: 175) as "cross-generational connections that are not sexual or erotic but provide support, community, information, and the sharing of stories and experiences between younger and older generations". The documentary talks about the desire of some interviewees to discuss heritage with older





lesbians and the realization that in Eressos, one could see older versions of oneself. Eressos is defined as a sort of living archive. The documentary does indeed contribute to creating a dynamic archive of lesbian history that documents how the ongoing translations (conflicts and negotiations) between international lesbians and the locals (lesbians and not lesbians) have been changing and transforming all these communities over time.

Biography

Michela Baldo is an assistant Professor in Translation Studies at the University of Birmingham (UK). Her research revolves around two strands. One is the translation into Italian of Italian-Canadian writing. On the topic she has authored a book, *Italian-Canadian Narratives of Return: Analysing Cultural Translation in Diasporic Writing* (2019) and has been working on Italian-Canadian queer writing. Her second strand of research concerns the role of translation in Italian queer transfeminist activism. On this topic she has co-edited a special issue of *TIS* (2021) on translation and LGBTQ+ activism, and a special issue of *Perspectives* (2023) on translating queer popular culture. She has also co-translated into English with Elena Basile the book *Queer Theories* (2020), by Lorenzo Bernini, and co-translated into Italian with feminoska an anthology of writing by Sara Ahmed, *Un'altra cena rovinata* (2023) and *Il manuale della femminista guastafeste* (2024) by the same author.

"If You Don't Laugh, You'll Cry": Queer Stand-Up Comedy Against the Anti-Gender Present

Martha Thickett

University of York

Abstract

Within the context of growing anti-gender ideology amidst a backdrop of right-wing populism, Anglo-American stand-up comedy is increasingly used to perpetuate misogyny and transphobia. This is exemplified by a culture of male sexual violence, as well as growing acceptance of explicitly transphobic humour on stage. However, interventions have been made by both professional and amateur stand-up comedians, who utilise humour to speak truth to power from their situated perspectives as queer performers.





This study will utilise participant observations at several Brighton Fringe stand-up comedy performances, as well as subsequent interviews with five stand-up comedians, to argue that stand-up comedy can be used as a catalyst for the proliferation of queerer futures against the current context of anti-gender ideology. Following a comparative analysis of non-queer comedic performance, the themes catharsis, community, social truth and self-expression will be used to explore how live performances of queer stand-up comedy can be considered heterotopic spaces, in which audiences and performers can indulge in collective moments of reimagining. Through shared laughter, the negative affects of shame, anger and disgust perpetuated against LGBTQ+ people by anti-gender ideology are disrupted, leaving room to embrace hope and pride. These moments of collective joy and understanding through comedy are crucial for the queer community at this point in time, as we must continue to laugh in the faces of those who seek to silence us.

Biography

Martha Thickett is a post-graduate researcher at York Law School. She is currently in the first year of her Collaborative Doctoral Award between the University of York, York Law School and LGBT foundation, after completing a Master's in Sexual Dissidence at the University of Sussex. Her PhD research consists of using arts-based methods to facilitate intergenerational dialogue between members of the LGBTQ+ community, in the face of legal changes in the past and present. She is particularly interested in queer futures, and spaces that allow for utopic re-imaginings within the present moment.

Panel 15 – Practices of Queerness

On our own terms?: Relationality as a femme practice of queerness

Chloë Brushwood Rose

York University, in Toronto

Abstract

Our oral history project (informally known as the Femme Story Archives) explores a unique period in Toronto's queer history, from 1990–2000, which saw a vibrant period of dialogue, organizing, and cultural production around queer femme identity and experience. 'Femme' is an identity marker that originally emerged from North American





working-class lesbian bar culture of the 1940s and 1950s. Femme referred to feminine-presenting lesbians who were understood in relation and contrast to butch, or masculine-presenting, lesbians. However, both femme and butch are terms that have circulated widely in queer culture across LGBTQ2+ communities. Starting in the 1960s, femme was also a term used by trans women of colour in Harlem’s Black and Latinx-dominated drag and ballroom cultures. This evolution of femme and its diverse lineages, as well as the denigration of femmes—alongside butch lesbians, sex workers, and BDSM and kink communities—by some feminists in the 1970s and 1980s, catalyzed a renaissance of queer femme culture in the 1990s that sought to articulate femme “on its own terms,” unhyphenated from butch. However, the femme narrators we interviewed enriched and complicated this history by contesting the organizing principle of a certain or stable femme identity. Their creative responses to questions about the nature of femme identity, which used metaphor and story, were generative of a relational (rather than individual) model of femme identity that foregrounds lineage, culture, and community as integral to queer survival. I argue that the creative ways in which our narrators articulated femme as an identity that is contextual and relational signal a uniquely femme practice of queerness.

Biography

Chloë Brushwood Rose (she/her) is a Professor of Education at York University, cross-appointed to several other graduate programs, including Gender, Feminist and Women’s Studies, and Cinema and Media Studies. She is the co-author of *Community-based Media Pedagogies: Relational Approaches to Listening in the Commons* (Routledge, 2016), and her scholarly work has appeared in many journals, including *Psychoanalysis, Culture & Society*; *Visual Studies*; and *Gender and Education*. Chloë is Principle Investigator on the SSHRC-funded project *On our own terms: An oral history and archive of femme cultural production in Toronto, 1990–2000* (@femmestoryarchives).

Femme pedagogy and the making of an alternative academic community

Jessica Fields





Jen Gilbert

University of Toronto

Abstract

QUAKE (Queers, Knowledge, and Education) is a graduate student/postdoc lab at the University of Toronto. QUAKE offers mentorship with a commitment to collaboration, intergenerational friendship, and queer relationality. Foregrounding decolonial, anti-racist, anti-ableist, and queer- and trans-liberatory practices, QUAKE resists the task of helping racialized, queer and trans students better assimilate into inhospitable professions. We hope QUAKE might be the grounds for reimagining academic success.

Our commitment as faculty mentors to QUAKE reflects our histories as femme and butch dykes seeking intellectual and intimate lives marked by love, care, and a visceral curiosity. Like other QUAKE members, we struggle to make sense of the wounds that sit at the heart of our intellectual commitments and that seem unspeakable in many academic settings. We have also felt the love that, as Amber Hollibaugh describes, the femme offers the butch: a love that “make[s] it right [for a butch] to want [her] that hard” (1983). We insist it’s right to “want that hard” an experience of education, desire, and research that allows and values intersecting histories of love, loss, violence, and intimacy.

QUAKE is thus organized around a “femme pedagogy” we understand to be a generative and generous response to the entangled wounds and desires that shape queer and gender expansive scholars, teachers, mentors, and lovers. As Joan Nestle reminds us, “Curiosity is not trivial; it is the respect one life pays to another. It is the largeness of mind and heart that refuses to be bounded by decorum or by desperation” (1992). In QUAKE’s femme pedagogy, curiosity is the grounds of a reparative refusal to separate intimate and intellectual interests and a recognition of their entanglement as the grounds of teaching and learning, a bridge to understanding, and their potential undoing.

Biography

Jessica Fields is a Professor in Health and Society, Sexual Diversity Studies, and Sociology at the University of Toronto.

Jen Gilbert is Professor in the Department of Curriculum, Teaching & Learning at the UofT Ontario Institute for Studies in Education (OISE).





Queer Non-Girls in the City: Rethinking Mobility and Belonging from Chennai

Sambhavi Varadarajan

CUNY Graduate Center

Abstract

Urban spaces in India, as elsewhere, are often structured around the movements of cisgender male-bodied youth, leaving the navigations of queer AFAB (assigned female at birth) youth largely invisible. Transmasculine, non-binary, and other queer-gendered AFAB youth disrupt dominant narratives of urban mobility by refusing both the feminized domesticity of normative girlhood and the masculinised public sphere that remains difficult to access. Yet their everyday negotiations of public, private, and digital landscapes remain invisible. This is especially true in postcolonial contexts. In my doctoral research, I ask: How do queer AFAB youth challenge normative gender and social structures to construct identities and negotiate belonging across contested urban environments? As a first-year doctoral student, I use this paper to introduce the conceptual and methodological frameworks that will guide my future fieldwork in Chennai, and open up conversations with the scholarly community as I begin this project. Drawing on Sara Ahmed's queer phenomenology (2006) and poststructuralist critiques of the "inescapability" of womanhood (Dube 2001), I centre the embodied experiences of queer non-girls—AFAB individuals socialised as females but who do not conform to normative expectations of becoming women. Turning to Chennai—a metropolitan city often sidelined in Indian queer imaginaries dominated by Delhi, Mumbai, Bangalore, and Kolkata—as a site of enquiry, I intend to diversify queer urban geography and examine how transnational queer cultures intersect with local socio-cultural constraints. This project seeks to expand the boundaries of girlhood studies, contribute to queer and trans geographies, and bring transfeminist and intersectional insights from the Global South into broader conversations about mobility, belonging, and urban futures.

Biography

Sambhavi Varadarajan (they/them) is a transdisciplinary researcher interested in all things relating to culture, place, identity and power. They hold an undergraduate degree in Journalism from University of Madras,





and read MSc International Politics at SOAS University of London. They have worked on projects on climate migration, queer politics, anti-trans violence, queer collectivity and more. Sambhavi is currently pursuing doctoral research at The Graduate Center at the City University of New York.

Film Screening:
“Loafers”

Orla Egan
Cork LGBT Archive

Film

Synopsis

Loafers Bar in Cork was one of Ireland’s longest running gay bars; it opened in 1983 and closed suddenly in 2015. Loafers was a crucial community space for the lesbian community, with the back bar being women-only every Thursday. Loafers was the venue for the raucous Pub Quiz as part of the annual Women’s Fun Weekend.

Biography

Orla Egan is a Queer Archival Activist and is Founder of the Cork LGBT Archive CLG. Orla is author of the Irish social activism graphic memoir *Diary Of An Activist* (2022), in collaboration with artist Megan Luddy O’Leary. She is author of the book *Queer Republic of Cork, Cork’s Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual and Transgender Communities 1970s–1990s* (2016) and of the short theatre play *Leeside Lezzies* (2018). She is Director of two Cork LGBT documentaries: *LOAFERS* (2023) and *I’m Here, I’m Home, I’m Happy* (2021). She has curated a number of exhibitions, including the *Queer Republic of Cork Exhibition* (2016), *Cork LGBT photography exhibition Cork Queeros* (2021), *Art & Activism: Diary Of An Activist Exhibition* (2023), *40 years of Cork Women’s (Fun) Weekend* (2024) and *Marriage Equality 10 year anniversary exhibition* (2025)

Workshop 7 – Research Ethics as Ethics of Care

Olu Jenzen, Lizzie Reed and Matty Kennedy (University of Southampton)

Abstract





The liveability of trans and gender diverse (TGD) young people is under pressure across different global settings, due to an increasingly hostile political climate and attacks on their human rights. In the Creativity, Community and Resilience project, <https://www.createconnectproject.co.uk>, we explore liveability by attending to aspects of TGD young people's lives that are drastically underrepresented in research: collective resilience, vitality and creativity. Whilst recognising situated vulnerabilities, we seek to centre youth as active participants and experts in their own lifeworlds and advocate a strength-based approach. Navigating these dynamics requires intervening in institutional ethics procedures and a research ethics of care, that not only acknowledges the history of violence experienced by trans communities in research settings but actively facilitates and supports participants' agency.

Our project seeks to engage TGD youth through participatory creative methodologies, including digital methods. These methodologies operate from a trans-centred and gender-affirming position while cultivating a critical awareness of the challenges that TGD youth face in their everyday lives. Informed by the learnings of our project, this workshop seeks to empower and inform researchers interested in participatory research with youth.

Part 1 focuses on the ethical considerations that are crucial to attend to when designing a research paradigm that engages LGBTQ+ youth as subjects of knowledge. Part 2 explores, via a set of interactive activities, aspects of generative, reciprocal and empowering research with LGBTQ+ youth. Scenarios will illustrate material and conceptual supports and resources aiding research designs that are trans and youth-centred, attentive to accessibility, marginality and researcher positionality, including allyship. Overall, participants will explore benefits of counteracting deficit approaches to LGBTQ+ youth research and building communities of care through research and research ethics.

Biography

Olu Jenzen (she/her) is Professor of Media and Digital Culture, University of Southampton, UK, with expertise in LGBTQ+ social media youth cultures. She is PL on the AHRC-funded project Creativity, Community & Resilience, researching trans and gender diverse young people's collective resilience and community building in the UK through a strength-based and youth-led participatory approach.





Lizzie Reed is an Associate Professor of Sociology at the University of Southampton. Lizzie's work explores LGBTQ+ everyday lives, queer kinship, visual methods, identity-making and crip time.

Matty Kennedy (he/they) is an interdisciplinary empiricist in the area of trans studies, an educator and a writer. He is currently a research fellow at the University of Southampton's Winchester School of Art, an adjunct assistant professor at the School of Nursing & Midwifery, Trinity College Dublin and the co-chair for the Trans* Research Association of Ireland. His writing can be found in *The Bulletin of Applied Transgender Studies*, *Irish University Review*, and *Poetry Ireland*, among others.

Workshop 8: Documenting the Past, Connecting the Present and Inspiring the Future: A Podcast

**Virginie Jortay (Independent radio producer);
Ilaria Todde (EuroCentralAsian Lesbian* Community);
Evien Tjabbes (EuroCentralAsian Lesbian Community)***

Abstract

A podcast series about the International Lesbian Information Service (ILIS) A Workshop/ Collective listening session (of extract from the podcast series) followed by a discussion.

Biography

VIRGINIE JORTAY (she/her) Virginie Jortay is a novel writer, theater and music director. She directed the School of Circus Arts in Brussels and managed the education and professional insertion programs at the French National Centre of Circus Arts (CNAC) in Chalons en Champagne. Trained as a media director at INSAS, she is currently involved in radio production projects in the Performing arts sector and joined various editorial boards and committees.

ILARIA TODDE is Advocacy and Research Director ("Dykeirector") at EL*C – EuroCentralAsian Lesbian* Community, where she leads policy, research, and advocacy initiatives at European and international level. She has extensive experience in EU institutions and has been central to developing EL*C's lesbian advocacy programme, the Observatory on





Lesbophobia and the organisation's intersectional research projects. An activist from Sardinia, Ilaria brings the perspective of a butch lesbian shaped by rural, traditional contexts, whose lifelong engagement in feminist and LGBTI struggles continues to ground and inspire her professional work.

EVIEEN TJABBES (she/her) As a former activist in ILIS, a co-founder of Interpot (Netherlands) and a present board member of the EuroCentralAsian Lesbian* Community I feel the urgency to retrieve and safeguard the unknown herstory, experience and knowledge of my former colleagues in ILIS and connect these with the present generation of activists.

Panel 17 – Lesbian Intimacies

The Motherhood Enigma: Activism for Married Lesbian Mothers in Britain, 1975–1991

Ellen Hope Durban

Abstract

Married to men in seemingly conventional marriages, women who were in fact lesbians were a significant minority of wives. In Britain in the 1970s, activists raised the alarm that lesbian mothers 'lost' custody of their children to their husbands in divorce court. Although unsubstantiated, this polemic belief endures in 2025 to exemplify the marginalisation of lesbians in society. Yet in the 1970s and 1980s, attempts to help married lesbian mothers contest custody did not gain universal attraction in the women's movement. Most organisations were short-lived; although ambitious, they lacked both funding and volunteers. This article explores why both heterosexual and lesbian feminists failed to support married lesbian mothers' fight for custody upon divorce: arguing for lesbian mothers to provide one hundred percent of the care for their children opposed the wider objectives of the mainstream women's movement.

Biography

As a cultural and legal historian, Ellen Hope Durban's research interests include the formation of sexual identity, lesbian history, activism to support victims of domestic violence, and women's experiences of marriage. Her recent PhD from UCL examined women overlooked by

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historians: lesbians who married men, bore children, and divorced in the latter half of twentieth-century Britain.

Stone Sexuality as Erotic Framework: Boundaries, Agency, and Intimacy

Prof Róisín Ryan-Flood

University of Essex


Abstract:

Stone identities have long been present within lesbian and queer communities, yet they remain under-researched and frequently misunderstood, particularly through frameworks that frame non-reciprocal erotics as deficit, trauma, or dysfunction. This article presents findings from a qualitative interview study exploring contemporary experiences of stone identity, including stone butch, stone femme, and relational orientations toward stone sexuality. Drawing on in-depth interviews with stone-identified individuals and people who are partnered with, formerly partnered with, or drawn to stone butches, the study examines how participants understand stone identity, erotic boundaries, embodiment, intimacy, and relational ethics. Using reflexive thematic analysis informed by feminist and queer theory, the article highlights stone identity as a coherent erotic and gendered framework rather than an absence of desire or intimacy. Participants describe stone sexuality as grounded in agency, boundary sovereignty, gendered embodiment, and relational attunement, while also navigating cultural assumptions about reciprocity, fairness, and sexual normalcy. By foregrounding both stone-identified voices and relational perspectives, the article extends existing scholarship on butch-femme cultures and queer erotics, offering an empirically grounded account of stone identity as lived, negotiated, and meaningful in contemporary queer life. The findings challenge dominant sexual norms and contribute to broader debates on consent, embodiment, and erotic diversity.

Biography:

Róisín Ryan-Flood is Professor of Sociology and Director of the Centre for Intimate and Sexual Citizenship (CISC) at the University of Essex. Her research interests include gender, sexuality, kinship, digital intimacies and feminist epistemology. She is the author and editor of numerous books, including *Lesbian Motherhood: Gender, Sexuality and Citizenship* (2009), *Secrecy and Silence in the Research*





Process (2010), *Transnationalising Reproduction: Third Party Conception in a Globalised World* (2018), *Difficult Conversations* (2023), *Consent: Gender, Power and Subjectivity* (2023), *Queering Desire* (2024) and *Stories, Imaginations and Sociology* (2026). She is also co-editor of the journal *Sexualities: Studies in Culture and Society*.

Border Intimacies: Contemporary Perspectives on Lesbian-Genderqueer Relationality

Susanna Jane Demelas

University of Oxford

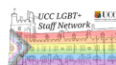
Abstract

With close reference to Anglo-American trans-exclusionary discourses, this paper situates itself against contemporary border war narratives that fail to envision a world where lesbian and transmasculine subjectivities can coexist, coalesce, and transform together. Pervasive far-right and TERF narratives perpetuate the notion that trans is lesbian's teleological vanquisher. Simultaneously, I acknowledge that the question of "borders" continues to haunt lesbian studies. Inspired by the capacious and fluid definitions of 'lesbian' that surfaced within my personal life, I embark on a series of open-ended and intimate discussions with individuals aged between 18 and 26 who identify with both lesbian and genderqueer. Together, we ask: to what extent is Lesbian a liberatory category of identification for genderqueer individuals? In doing so, we consider whether Lesbian and Queer can be understood as compatible, despite their critical and methodological tensions.

By fusing oral history methodology with close literary and critical analysis, I argue that contemporary engagements with lesbian histories and cultures enable the cultivation of affirmative relationalities that disrupt the foundations of hetero-patriarchal hegemony.

Biography

Susanna Jane Demelas is a scholar and writer based between Oxford and Glasgow and Book Review Editor for *The Journal of Lesbian Studies*.





Panel 18 – Fingering Through the Archives

Chain Reaction: Rebel Dykes in Their Own Words and the Ethics of Sex, Desire, Oral Histories and Archives

Rachel Smith

University of Essex / Bishopsgate Institute

Abstract

This talk will give an overview of my PhD research at the Centre for Intimate and Sexual Citizenship (CISC) in the Sociology Department at the University of Essex, where I'm researching The Rebel Dykes, a group of lesbians who ran the UK's first women-only S&M club, 'Chain Reaction', held at the Market Tavern in South London from 1987-1990. I will share about cataloguing The Rebel Dykes Archive (RDA), what has been written about Rebel Dykes and Chain Reaction academically, why they have been excluded from both archives at large and the Lesbian Archive and Information Centre (LAIC), and the importance of capturing these lesbian histories. I will end with a brief summary of my methodology for collecting these histories, using archival and feminist theory, with consent being at the centre of my practice.

Biography

Rachel Smith was born in Providence, raised in Hope, Rhode Island, and currently resides in London, where she is an archivist at Bishopsgate Institute. She is also an award-winning screenwriter. *The Love That Dares* is her first work of non-fiction, after releasing a collection of her poetry and photography, *Words & Pictures*, in 2016. Currently, she is working on her PhD at the Centre for Intimate and Sexual Citizenship at the University of Essex, where she will interview the Rebel Dykes who attended Chain Reaction.

Tender mourning: lesbian* life and living in and out of the archives.

Caroline Gonda

University of Cambridge

Abstract

This paper is a reflection on aspects of lesbian* life and living in the archives. Like my last two talks for Lesbian Lives, it mixes academic work and personal creative writing. It explores the very different archival traces left by two important figures in lesbian* and queer history, the sculptor

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Anne Damer (1748/9–1828) and the diarist Anne Lister (1791–1840). It also continues to develop some ideas about love and knowledge from my 2022 talk, *We Touch, (Not) Through The Machine*, and about memory, emotion and place from my 2024 talk, *Vanishing Stories*. Both of those papers were concerned with loss, and this one is too, though it's also about what survives, and how. I'm thinking about the materials of queer lives, and the forms that life-writing can take: letters and diaries, notebooks, commonplace-books, memoranda, instructions and wills. I'm also concerned with the embodied and affective experience of following the traces left by these women and attempting to interpret their lives and writings. My title comes from Holly Pester's poetic response to archival research, *When She Got In The Sink I Cried*, where she writes beautifully about encountering "points of illegibility" that "feel like moments of tender mourning in the archive".

Biography

Caroline Gonda is Glen Cavaliero Fellow in English at St Catharine's College, Cambridge. She is currently working on two celebrated figures from lesbian and queer history, the sculptor Anne Damer (1748/9–1828), and the diarist Anne Lister (1791–1840). Her most recent book is *Decoding Anne Lister: From the Archives to 'Gentleman Jack'*, co-edited with Chris Roulston, and she and Roulston are co-editors of the *Cambridge Companion to Anne Lister*. Her creative work has appeared in places including *Reflex*, *Lunate*, *Ellipsis*, *Janus Literary*, *NFFD FlashFlood*, *The Propelling Pencil*, *Paragraph Planet*, and in the flash fiction anthologies *L'indépendance/Independence*, *Tomorrow's World/Le Monde de Demain*, *Beguiled By A Wild Thing* and *Legerdemain*. She has also written exhibition catalogue essays for Tate Britain (*Queer British Art, 1861–1967*) and Barbican (*Modern Couples: Art, Intimacy and the Avant-Garde*), and a Pride Month blog for the British Museum, "Anne Seymour Damer: public life, private love".

40 years of Cork Women's Fun Weekend

Orla Egan

Cork LGBT Archive

Abstract

40 years of Cork Women's Fun Weekend Exhibition: Display 6 pull up banners – the Cork Women's Fun Weekend began in 1984 and is still





running today (now called Cork Women's Weekend). This exhibition traces the history of the Cork Women's (Fun) Weekend from 1984 onwards and showcases the various weekend events, including the Opening Circle, Workshops, Sports, Socials and the Pub Quiz. In addition to the exhibition I propose screening my *Loafers* documentary: *Loafers* Bar in Cork was one of Ireland's longest running gay bars; it opened in 1983 and closed suddenly in 2015. *Loafers* was a crucial community space for the lesbian community, with the back bar being women-only every Thursday. *Loafers* was the venue for the raucous Pub Quiz as part of the annual Women's Fun Weekend.

Biography

Orla Egan is a Queer Archival Activist and is Founder of the Cork LGBT Archive CLG. Orla is author of the Irish social activism graphic memoir *Diary Of An Activist* (2022), in collaboration with artist Megan Luddy O'Leary. She is author of the book *Queer Republic of Cork, Cork's Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual and Transgender Communities 1970s–1990s* (2016) and of the short theatre play *Leaside Lezzies* (2018). She is Director of two Cork LGBT documentaries: *LOAFERS* (2023) and *I'm Here, I'm Home, I'm Happy* (2021). She has curated a number of exhibitions, including the *Queer Republic of Cork* Exhibition (2016), Cork LGBT photography exhibition *Cork Queeros* (2021), *Art & Activism: Diary Of An Activist* Exhibition (2023), *40 years of Cork Women's (Fun) Weekend* (2024) and *Marriage Equality 10 year anniversary* exhibition (2025).

Finding and Not-Finding: Queer Archival Practices

Dr. Kimberley Mather

University of Manchester

Abstract

Emerging at the intersection of the archival and the autobiographical, Darcy Leigh's online archive, a butch archive, and the accompanying zine, Curatorial Notes, tell a story of the search for butch history. This is journey of 'finding and not-finding' that is compelled by anxieties over the supposed decline of the cultural relevance of the butch. In my examination of this work, I demonstrate the archival practices that are implicated in the very creation of these archives, the actions of searching,





finding, and not-finding, are active processes through which Leigh's butch identifications are negotiated, contested or affirmed.

I argue that the butch's dissonant temporality, as a figure that is simultaneously out of time, behind the times and ahead of time all at once, sparks an anxious desire to preserve history and to continually expand (or complete) the archive. To mitigate the potential disappearance of the butch, Leigh offers a promise of continual expansion, of creating an ever increasing and elastic archive that turns towards alternative and disruptive archival practices which make the 'not-knowing' and 'not-finding' productive sites of queer history. This is, however, a promise that remains unfulfilled and the frustration expressed by Leigh at not being able to capture exactly what they are looking for, to construct an archive with which they can fully express a butch identity, exposes how our affective investments in archival objects are often met with failure and disappointment, suggesting the impossibility of capturing the ephemeral nature of queer history.

Biography

Kimberley Mather recently completed her PhD at the University of Manchester. Her thesis, entitled 'A roadmap to myself: Disrupting and Reimagining the Boundaries of 'Female Masculinity' in Butch and Transmasculine Autobiographical Narratives' interrogates how the boundaries of butchness and transmasculinity are established, affirmed and contested in autobiographical writing. Her paper, 'In Their Loving Gaze I Saw Who I Could Be': Revisiting the Butch/Femme Couple as Joint Subject through Esther Newton's My Butch Career, is published in Queering Desire: Lesbians, Gender and Subjectivity, edited By Róisín Ryan-Flood and Amy Tooth Murphy.

Panel 19 – Lives dedicated to forging and sustaining lesbian communities through art-based activism

Abstract

In this panel discussion, participants will reflect on lives dedicated to forging and sustaining lesbian communities through art-based activism. Live performance can move audiences, sometimes to laughter and tears, and – sometimes – to act. What moves people, how, and to what ends,





changes from era-to-era, place-to-place, group-to-group, though there are some sapphic strategies (including humor!) that we have gleaned from our specific practices, which range from devising performance pieces to writing critical assessments about the work that inspires us. Participants: Holly Hughes (University of Michigan); Lois Weaver (Queer Mary University of London, retired); Moe Angelos (The Builders Association); Jill Dolan (Princeton University, emerita); Sara Warner (Cornell University); This will be an in-person session.

Participants & Biographies

Holly Hughes

(keynote performer Lesbian Lives 2025) is an internationally acclaimed performance artist whose work maps the troubled fault lines of identity. Her combination of poetic imagery and political satire has earned her wide attention and placed her work at the center of America's culture wars.

Lois Weaver

co-founder of WOW Café and Split Britches, is a Guggenheim-winning American artist, activist, writer, director, and professor emerita of Contemporary Performance at Queen Mary University of London.

Moe Angelos

Is an American theater artist, playwright, and performer. She is a member of the Obie Award-winning theatre company The Builders Association and a co-founder of the Obie Award-winning company, The Five Lesbian Brothers.

Jill Dolan

Professor emerita of Princeton University, is an award-winning author, educator, blogger and feminist.

Sara Warner

Director of LGBT Studies at Cornell University, is an educator, writer and activist.

Laura Flanders





(@GRITlaura) is the author of several bestselling books, the host of the nationally-syndicated public television (and radio) show The Laura Flanders Show, a contributing writer to The Nation Magazine, and the recipient of a 2019 Lannan Cultural Freedom Fellowship. She lives with her partner, the action-hero Elizabeth Streb in New York.

Workshop 9 – SNAPSHOT SELVES: An Autobiographical Collage & Zine Workshop

Eve Archer (University of Brighton)

Abstract

This guided workshop will explore self-imagery through collaging and zine-making: how we perceive ourselves and how we would like to be perceived, how we document our lives and how we wish to be remembered. Participants will experiment with autobiographical and creative research practices to create visio-verbal narratives that capture snapshots of their current lives, making card-sized collages and/or following prompts from a pre-made zine.

Participants will be invited to ‘capture’ their identities, creating ‘snapshot’ cards using collage materials, personal iconography, colours and text. The cards are small and transportable, easily carried in a wallet, used as a bookmark, as artwork on a shelf or as a gift to a loved one, with the opportunity to laminate them at the end of the session. Participants will be provided with crafting materials and examples to spark inspiration.

This workshop builds on my ongoing dual practice-research PhD project ‘Queer Immortality: The creation, collection and preservation of LGBTQ+ histories through Small Art and participatory DIY artistic initiatives’, which employs accessible arts/craft methods with low skill entry to encourage LGBTQ+ individuals to document their lived realities. This research exists alongside queer archival methodologies that champion Small Art forms and ephemera as valuable evidence, embracing the ethos of DIY: recognising the need for communal interaction and the experimental nature of art to create a truly adaptive methodology. This workshop will explore how play energises and activates arts-based research, emphasising the process rather than a finalised outcome.

This space is designed to be low-stakes, non-prescriptive and without the pressure to produce a finished artwork, shifting the focus to planning and experimenting. Additional goals are to foster continued artistic self-





expression and introduce a self-recording method that participants can re-use at any time, to reflect how identities change, shift and grow.

Biography

Eve Archer is an illustrator and PhD candidate at Brighton University, supported by a Techne (AHRC) studentship. With a particular focus on print forms and zines, her artwork explores LGBTQ+ narratives, intimacies and mythologies alongside the transformative potential of queer bodies and her lesbian identity. Her doctoral research investigates LGBTQ+ visual cultures by queering processes of recording and remembering.

Film Screening: Three Thousand Lesbians Go to York: the story of a lesbian arts festival

Jane Traies

Abstract

In the first decade of this millennium, thousands of women would flock each autumn to the historic city of York in northern England, to hear their favourite authors and performers, buy piles of lesbian books and dance till the clocks went back. By 2003, the Lesbian Arts Festival was the largest gathering of lesbian and bi women in the UK, and had become an international event, hosting authors such as Katherine V Forrest and Alison Bechdel. Friendships and partnerships were formed and identities forged at this much-loved festival. Renowned crime writer Val McDermid called it 'a weekend on Planet Dyke.' The research project '3000 Lesbians Go to York' brings that iconic period of queer women's history to life again for a new generation, through the voices and memories of those who were there. Published in February 2025 as a lavishly illustrated book, the story has also been turned into a film which will screen at Lesbian Lives this year. In this paper, oral historian and author Jane Traies describes the practical and ethical challenges this project presented, as it morphed from an exercise in oral history into a mixed-methods community endeavour. She will also reflect on the political resonance in 2020s Britain of telling a lesbian story with a trans woman at its heart.

Biography

Jane Traies is an independent historian and writer. Her PhD research at the University of Sussex explored the life experiences of older lesbians; her first two books, *The Lives of Older Lesbians: Sexuality, Identity and*





the Life Course (Palgrave Macmillan, 2016) and Now You See Me: Lesbian Life Stories (Tollington Press, 2018) expanded on this work. She has also used oral history methods to tell the life stories of queer women seeking asylum in the UK (Free to Be Me: Refugee Stories from the Lesbian Immigration Support Group, Tollington Press, 2021). Her latest book, 3000 Lesbians Go to York (Tollington Press 2025) tells the story of the UK's largest and longest-lasting queer arts festival.

Workshop 10 – Lesbian* life in “ordinary” places

Naoise Murphy (University of Manchester)

Abstract

Stories of queer life tend to be structured around narratives of escape, from the (implicitly homophobic) small town to the (supposedly queer-friendly) big city. But experience tells us that queer and lesbian* living has had a more complicated relationship to place. Suburbs, villages, housing estates and the countryside have all played host to versions of lesbian* life and living, while also, perhaps despite appearances, being enmeshed in larger stories of migration, empire, property, development and home. Countering the metronormative bias in narratives of queer and lesbian* life, this workshop offers a space to reflect on queer connections to places that haven't been so well-studied in queer culture. Rejecting simplistic narratives of belonging and non-belonging, it is an invitation to dwell with the messy, the uncomfortable, the unexpected and the unremarkable.

We might ask questions like: what is an “ordinary” place? How have queer people negotiated ordinariness? What happens if we don't follow the well-trodden path from small town to big city? What other stories have been told – in literature, art, music, film, TV, and other cultural forms – about queer relationships with place? Through creative activities and mapping, this workshop invites participants to reflect on personal experiences of place, to develop queer understandings of visibility and ordinariness, and to share relevant examples from literary or other cultural representations. Together, we will build a collaborative map that charts a new spatial story of lesbian* life and living. This is a pilot workshop for my Leverhulme Early Career Fellowship project, ‘Quiet visibility: mapping the lesbian middlebrow’. Alongside literary and historical research, focusing on lesbian and transmasculine visibility in





'middlebrow' fiction of the mid-twentieth-century, the project seeks to engage queer communities in thinking about our relationships to place outside of the dominant rural-to-urban narrative of queer life. It contends that a place-based approach can help us to understand and articulate queer entanglements in the classist, racist, and colonialist systems that have shaped Britain and Ireland.

Biography

Naoise Murphy is a Leverhulme Early Career Fellow at the University of Manchester, working on lesbian and transmasculine visibility, place, and twentieth-century 'middlebrow' fiction. Their first book, 'Queering Twentieth-Century Irish Women's Writing: Uneasy Moderns', was published recently by Edinburgh University Press.

