



# Committee on Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual & Transgender History

Fall 2016 • Vol. 30:2 • <http://www.clgbthistory.org>

## IN THIS ISSUE

Co-Chairs' Column	1
<i>LGBTQ America Today</i>	2
Members' Announcements	4
AHA Sessions	6
Book Reviews	9

### Reviews in this issue

- Nicole Albert, *Lesbian Decadence*
- Gretchen Schultz, *Sapphic Fathers*
- Marlon M. Bailey, *Butch Queens Up in Pumps*
- Ben Eshleman, Jess Wiltey, Charlie Backus, and Maxwell Harvey-Sampson, *Trans Rochester Speaks*
- Susan C. Seymour, *Cora Du Bois*
- Jennifer Tyburczy, *Sex Museums*

### Committee on LGBT History

**Co-chairs:** Amanda Littauer and Nick Syrett  
**Book Review Editor:** Dan Royles  
**Newsletter Editor:** April Haynes

### CO-CHAIRS' COLUMN Fall 2016

It is with heavy hearts that we write this column a month after the election of Donald Trump and many other Republicans, all on a platform of misogyny, racism, transphobia, heterosexism, and xenophobia. While as of this writing Trump has publicly referred to marriage equality as “settled law,” as queers we must not be complacent: marriage equality may protect the most privileged among us, but it does little to

combat discrimination against people of color, women, undocumented immigrants, trans and genderqueer folks, Muslims, and those who reject—or are rejected by—mainstream “respectability.” Indeed, that Trump has so quickly countenanced same-sex marriage should tell us something about just which gays have always been seen as most acceptable in the first place. And while Trump may see same-sex marriage as constitutionally protected, Mike Pence clearly does not, and future Supreme Court nominees also may not. Our times require us to be vigilant, organized, and tireless in fighting for the rights and indeed the lives of queer people and other targeted communities.

This year’s annual meeting of the American Historical Association gives us an opportunity to come together in support of one another and of the vital work we do to educate students across the country about our vibrant queer past. This year at the AHA, we can roughly divide our panels into three groups. As bookends for the entire conference, we organized two panels on teaching survey courses: one on the Latin American survey, the first session of the AHA; and one on the U.S. surveys, the last session. Please encourage your colleagues who do not already teach or study queer history to attend these sessions where panelists will share a variety of easy-to-incorporate resources, events, subjects, and themes.

On Thursday we are putting on a panel exploring the experience of queer historians—those who

do and do not study queer history—on the job market. It will feature the experiences of those in history departments, as well as ethnic studies and women’s studies, and those who found careers outside of traditional academia. Following last year’s successful session on publishing in queer history, we are hoping that this session will meet the needs of members who are interested in professional development through a queer lens. To that end, we are delighted to continue our mentorship program, directed by CLGBTH board member Cookie Woolner. If you are interested in participating—as a mentee or mentor—please email Cookie at [cwoolner@memphis.edu](mailto:cwoolner@memphis.edu). We’re also excited to include a tour in the local arrangements program: interested participants will receive an introduction to queer-themed archives and the Colorado LGBT History Project at the Denver Public Library with archivist Jim Kroll. That takes place on Saturday afternoon at 2pm and those interested must sign up during the AHA registration process.

Thanks to the leadership of board members Emily Hobson and Stephen Vider, we have three panels honoring the life and work of queer Latino oral historian Horacio N. Roque Ramírez, who died just prior to last year’s AHA. Those sessions will take place on Friday. On Saturday we offer up a slate of panels on queering historical scale, the overall theme of the conference. Finally, we cosponsored a panel on the California FAIR Act, featuring former co-chair Don Romesburg. A complete lineup of all panels can be found later in the newsletter and on our [website](#).

Of course the CLGBTH AHA would not be itself without some social gatherings. On Friday night we are delighted to be joining the newly constituted AHA [Committee on LGBTQ Status in the Profession](#) for its first annual reception. There we will give out two prizes: the John Boswell Prize for best book in queer history and the Joan Nestle prize for best undergraduate paper. On Saturday night Nick will host CLGBTH members and friends at a party at his house, about a ten-minute cab ride from the conference headquarters. Further details to come via email.

CLBTH Fall 2016

In the weeks to come, look out for further announcements about the theme of next year’s CLGBTH-sponsored sessions, when the annual meeting returns to Washington, D.C. You should already have received an email from Treasurer Rebecca Davis asking you to renew your membership or, if you are a lifetime member already, make a contribution. [Online dues payment](#) is remarkably easy, and remains as affordable as ever, so we encourage you to renew as soon as you are able.

In the meantime, however, we wish everyone a productive end-of-semester and a wonderful winter holiday. We look forward to seeing you in Denver!

In solidarity,  
*Amanda & Nick*

## *LGBTQ America Today*

**The United States National Park Service** has just released a groundbreaking new publication on LGBTQ history, [LGBTQ America Today: A Theme Study of Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual, Transgender and Queer History](#). This monumental work, with 32 chapters contributed by 27 historians, is the first assessment of queer place-based history and historic preservation sponsored by a national government anywhere in the world. It provides an overview of key themes in U.S. queer history; a framework to assist preservation advocates in identifying, interpreting and preserving LGBTQ places; and a resource for supporting nomination of sites for National Register and National Landmark status. Authors and peer reviewers included many CLGBTH members. Member Gerard Koskovich’s chapter is entitled, "[The History of Queer History](#): One Hundred Years of the Search for a Shared Heritage."

The Department of the Interior announced the publication of *LGBTQ America Today* with the following press release:

WASHINGTON, October 11, 2016 – U.S. Secretary of the Interior Sally Jewell today joined National Park Service Director Jonathan B. Jarvis and Tim Gill, philanthropist and founder of the Gill Foundation to announce the release of a new National Park Service theme study identifying places and events associated with the history of lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender and queer-identified Americans. The release of the theme study coincides with National Coming Out Day, a commemoration first celebrated in 1988 on the anniversary of the first March on Washington for Lesbian and Gay Rights.

[LGBTQ America: A Theme Study of Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual, Transgender, and Queer History](#) is the first of its kind study conducted by a national government to chronicle historical places, documents, people and events that shaped the LGBTQ civil rights movement in America. The National Park Service (NPS) coordinated the study with support from the [National Park Foundation](#) and funding from the [Gill Foundation](#) as part of a broader initiative under the Obama Administration to ensure that the NPS reflects and tells a more complete story of the people and events responsible for building this nation.

“For far too long, the struggles and contributions of lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender and queer-identified Americans have been ignored in the traditional narratives of our nation’s history,” said Secretary Jewell. “This theme study is the first of its kind by any national government to identify this part of our shared history, and it will result in an important step forward in reversing the current underrepresentation of stories and places associated to the LGBTQ community in the complex and diverse story of America.” The theme study is a pivotal moment for the LGBTQ community as it establishes, for the first time, a framework for inclusion and recognition of places associated with people and events that made LGBTQ history and left a mark on American history. The theme study provides the big picture that will help these important places to be considered for designation as National Historic Landmarks or nominated to the National Register of Historic Places. It will also guide and

inform the presentation of LGBTQ history by professors and teachers, and will serve as a reference for the general public.

“In 2016 the National Park Service is marking our centennial anniversary and the upcoming 50th anniversary of the National Historic Preservation Act on October 15 with a renewed commitment to share a more complete history of our nation with the next generation of Americans,” said National Park Service Director Jonathan B. Jarvis. “Through heritage initiatives like the LGBTQ theme study, the National Park Service is commemorating the inspiring stories of minorities and women who have made significant contributions to our nation’s history and culture.” Secretary Jewell announced plans for the theme study in 2014 at an event outside the Stonewall Inn in New York City alongside National Park Service leadership and Tim Gill. Experts in LGBTQ studies wrote and peer-edited over 1,200 pages of the theme study. Chapters chart LGBTQ histories across the United States—from the native māhū of Hawai’i and lhamana of the Zuni, to the drag queens of the Stonewall Uprising, from private residences, hotels, bars, and government agencies to hospitals, parks and community centers. Authors and peer reviewers included professors, filmmakers, historians, geographers, archivists and museum curators, researchers, experts in historic preservation, historical archaeologists, journalists and members of the clergy.

“LGBT history is American history and as we celebrate the Centennial anniversary of the National Park Service, I can think of no better time to advocate for a more accurate and inclusive view of the American experience,” said Tim Gill, founder of the Gill Foundation.

“Thanks to the generous support of Tim Gill and the Gill Foundation, this important study was possible,” said Will Shafroth, president of the National Park Foundation, the official charity of America’s national parks. “This work helps expand the scope of the history preserved within our National Park System and honor an America that represents us all.”

Earlier this year Secretary Jewell and Director Jarvis returned to New York City to participate in a public dedication ceremony following President Obama's designation of the [Stonewall National Monument](#), the nation's first monument to honor the story of LGBTQ Americans, on June 24, 2016.

In addition to the Stonewall National Monument, the Obama Administration recognized the Henry Gerber House in Chicago as a National Historic Landmark, and designated eight other LGBTQ sites on the National Register of Historic Places. These include:

- [The Furies Collective](#) House in Washington, D.C. – May 2, 2016
- [Edificio Comunidad de Orgullo Gay de Puerto Rico](#) (commonly known as Casa Orgullo or Pride House) in San Juan, Puerto Rico – May 1, 2016
- [Julius' Bar](#) in New York, NY – April 20, 2016
- [Bayard Rustin Residence](#) in New York, NY – March 8, 2016
- [Cherry Grove Community House & Theater](#) in Cherry Grove, NY – June 4, 2014
- [Carrington House](#) in Fire Island Pines, NY – January 8, 2014
- [James Merrill House](#) in Stonington, CT – August 28, 2013
- [Dr. Franklin E. Kameny Residence](#) in Washington, DC – November 2, 2011

In 2010, the National Historic Landmark (NHL) Program began actively looking for sites associated with LGBTQ history that may have the potential to be designated as NHLs or listed in the National Register of Historic Places. Owner approval for these sites is necessary before nominations can be prepared and the NHL Program has begun working with the LGBTQ community to encourage both outreach to owners and the completion of nominations for these properties.

The LGBTQ Theme Study is one of four such studies either recently completed or underway

by the National Park Service. Other studies have examined or are studying the contributions of women, Latino Americans, and Asian Americans and Pacific Islanders. Previous studies on African-Americans and American Indians were completed in 2003 and 1990 respectively.

## Members' Announcements

**Ian Lekus, Amnesty International's LGBT specialist**, will launch a new podcast in January. *Radio Free Qtopia* is dedicated to boosting the signal for & preserving the voices of some amazing activists, artists, educators, & other people doing brave, creative work in unexpected & even dangerous places to make the world more queer inclusive & affirming. Ian writes, "Now more than ever, we need better stories and we need to change the narrative. If we ever sought evidence that we make decisions based on stories — and that even false stories have extraordinary power — we now have all we ever need. I hope you'll consider [supporting](#) this project. Please also follow *Radio Free Qtopia* on Facebook and Twitter (@radiofreeqtopia) and share news of this podcast."

**OutHistory** has launched a major new archive and exhibit, "[U.S. Homophile Internationalism](#)." It features more than 1000 LGBT magazine items from the 1950s and 1960s that referenced Africa, Asia and the Pacific, Canada, Latin America and the Caribbean, the Middle East, and Russia, Eastern Europe, and the Soviet Union. The exhibit includes introductory essays on the project and the regions, regional bibliographies, and digitized images of letters to the editor, news and feature stories, and other items in the homophile press. The goal of the project is to inspire new work on international, transnational, and global LGBT history. Funded by a multi-year grant by the Social Sciences and Humanities Research Council of Canada, the archive and exhibit were created by San Francisco State University historian Marc Stein and a team of six graduate student researchers at York University in Toronto: Shlomo Gleibman, Tamara de Szegeho Lang, Marva Milo, Dasha Serykh, Carly



Simpson, and Healy Thompson. In 2017 the project's work will continue with a collection of essays published as a special issue of the Journal of Homosexuality.

**Call for Blog Posts:** *Sexual Violence in Higher Education*. [ConditionallyAccepted.com](http://ConditionallyAccepted.com) — a weekly career advice column for marginalized scholars on InsideHigherEd — welcomes blog posts about *sexual assault, rape, stalking, intimate partner violence, and sexual harassment in higher education*. We are especially interested in reflections on sexual violence as a manifestation of systems of oppression other than sexism (like heterosexism, cissexism) and at the intersections among systems of oppression; in addition, we are interested in featuring essays on sexual violence perpetrated against LGBTQ+ people, women of color, fat and plus-size people, men, and people with disabilities. See the full call for blog posts [here](#). Blog posts should range between 750-1,250 words and be written for a broad academic audience. We pay \$200 per post (if accepted). Please [email](#) pitches or full blog posts to [Eric Anthony Grollman](#), Ph.D. (pronouns: *they/them/theirs*), Assistant Professor of Sociology, University of Richmond.

**CLGBTH board member Emily K. Hobson** published *Lavender and Red: Liberation and Solidarity in the Gay and Lesbian Left* (University of California Press, 2016). Too often LGBTQ activism is represented as a self-contained struggle, set apart from other social movements. In *Lavender and Red*, Emily K. Hobson recounts a different history, one of queer radicals who understood their sexual liberation as intertwined with solidarity against imperialism, war, and racism. Centering on the gay and lesbian left in the late 1960s through early 1990s San Francisco Bay Area, she illuminates how sexual self-determination and revolutionary internationalism converged. Across the 1970s gay and lesbian leftists embraced socialist feminism and women of color feminism to craft a queer opposition to militarism and the New Right. In the Reagan years, they challenged U.S. intervention in Central America, collaborated with their peers in Nicaragua, and mentored the first direct action

CLBTH Fall 2016

against AIDS. *Lavender and Red* brings together archival research, oral histories, and vibrant images and rediscovers the radical queer past for a generation of activists today.

**Héctor Domínguez Ruvalcaba** published *Translating the Queer: Body Politics and Transnational Conversations* (Zed Books, 2016). What does it mean to queer a concept? If queerness is a notion that implies a destabilization of the normativity of the body, then all cultural systems contain zones of discomfort relevant to queer studies. What then might we make of such zones when the use of the term queer itself has transcended the fields of sex and gender, becoming a metaphor for addressing such cultural phenomena as hybridization, resignification, and subversion? Further still, what should we make of it when so many people are reluctant to use the term queer, because they view it as theoretical colonialism, or a concept that loses its specificity when applied to a culture that signifies and uses the body differently? *Translating the Queer* focuses on the dissemination of queer knowledge, concepts and representations throughout Latin America, a migration that has been accompanied by concomitant processes of translation, adaptation and epistemological resistance.

**Leslie Choquette** published "Gay Parea: The Origins of Lesbian and Gay Commercial Culture in the French Third Republic" in *Contemporary French Civilization*, vol. 41, no. 1, spring 2016; and "Beyond the Myth of Lesbian Montmartre: The Case of Chez Palmyre" in *Historical Reflections/Réflexions historiques*, vol. 42, no. 2, summer 2016.

**Nancy C. Unger** gave a talk at the Birmingham, Alabama Public Library on the role of gay bars in American history. Her talk was [recorded](#) and archived in the C-SPAN online library.

## AHA 2017

### THURSDAY, JANUARY 5

#### **1:30-3:00pm – Incorporating Queer History into Latin American Survey Courses: A Roundtable**

*Mile High Ballroom 1A (Colorado Convention Center, Ballroom Level)*

*Cosponsored by the Conference on Latin American History and the AHA Teaching Division*

#### **Chair:**

Nick Syrett, University of Northern Colorado

#### **Panel:**

Pablo E. Ben, San Diego State University  
Benjamin A. Cowan, George Mason University  
Zeb Tortorici, New York University  
Heather A. Vrana, Southern Connecticut State University

#### **3:30-5:00pm – Queer Scholars and Scholarship on the Job Market: A Roundtable**

*Mile High Ballroom 1D (Colorado Convention Center, Ballroom Level)*

#### **Chair:**

Nicholas L. Syrett, University of Northern Colorado

#### **Panel:**

Julio Capó Jr., University of Massachusetts Amherst  
April Haynes, University of Wisconsin–Madison  
Jen Manion, Amherst College  
Allison Miller, *Perspectives on History*  
Amy H. Sueyoshi, San Francisco State University

### FRIDAY, JANUARY 6

#### **8:30-10:00am – In Honor of Horacio N. Roque Ramírez, Part 1: Oral History as Queer Archive: Listening with Horacio N. Roque Ramírez**

*Mile High Ballroom 1A (Colorado Convention Center, Ballroom Level)*

*Cosponsored by the Oral History Association*

#### **Chair:**

Stephen Vider, Museum of the City of New York

#### **Panel:**

Lauren Gutterman, University of Texas at Austin  
Griselda Jarquin, University of California, Davis  
Cyra Wyker, Middle Tennessee State University

#### **Comment:**

Stephen Vider, Museum of the City of New York

#### **10:30am-12:00pm – In Honor of Horacio N. Roque Ramírez, Part 2: Remembering the Life and Work of Horacio N. Roque Ramírez: A Roundtable**

*Mile High Ballroom 1A (Colorado Convention Center, Ballroom Level)*

*Cosponsored by the Oral History Association*

#### **Chair:**

Nan Alamilla Boyd, San Francisco State University

#### **Panel:**

Jennifer Brier, University of Illinois at Chicago  
William A. Calvo-Quirós, University of Michigan  
Marla Ramirez, San Francisco State University

#### **Comment:**

Nan Alamilla Boyd, San Francisco State University

#### **12:30-1:30pm – CLGBTH Members' Meeting: All Welcome!**

*Room 604 (Colorado Convention Center, Meeting Room Level)*

**Presiding:**

Amanda H. Littauer, Northern Illinois University  
Nicholas L. Syrett, University of Northern Colorado

**1:30-3:00pm – In Honor of Horacio N. Roque Ramírez, Part 3: That's His Place! Horacio N. Roque Ramírez and Queer Latina/o/x Histories**

*Mile High Ballroom 1A (Colorado Convention Center, Ballroom Level)*  
*Cosponsored by the Oral History Association*

**Chair:**

Emily K. Hobson, University of Nevada at Reno

**Panel:**

Julio Capó Jr., University of Massachusetts Amherst  
Anahi Russo Garrido, Metropolitan State University of Denver  
David Hernández, Mount Holyoke College  
Ana Minian, Stanford University

**Comment:**

Emily K. Hobson, University of Nevada at Reno

**3:30-5:00pm – The Role of Historians in a Time of Backlash: An Open Conversation**

*Mile High Ballroom 1A (Colorado Convention Center, Ballroom Level)*

*Sponsored by the AHA Committee on LGBTQ Status in the Profession*

**Chair:**

Leisa D. Meyer, College of William and Mary

**Panel:**

Leah DeVun, Rutgers, The State University of New Jersey  
Wallace D. Best, Princeton University  
Debbie Ann Doyle, American Historical Association

**7:30-8:30pm – LGBTQ Historians' Reception**

CLBTH Fall 2016

*Capitol Ballroom 1 (Hyatt Regency Denver, Fourth Floor) Sponsored by Gale*

**SATURDAY, JANUARY 7**

**8:30-10:00am – Queering Historical Scale, Part 1: Queer Histories of Sex Work and Sexual Commerce**

*Mile High Ballroom 1A (Colorado Convention Center, Ballroom Level)*

**Chair:**

Don Romesburg, Sonoma State University

**Papers:**

“Queer Cures: Commercial Sex Therapies in 19th-Century New York”  
April Haynes, University of Wisconsin–Madison

“Male-Male Prostitution in 1950s–70s Italian Fiction”  
Alessio Ponzio, University of Michigan

“Sepia Sex Scenes: Black Women’s Erotic Labor in Early Pornographic Film”  
Mireille Miller-Young, University of California, Santa Barbara

**Comment:**

Don Romesburg, Sonoma State University

**10:30am-12:00pm – Queering Historical Scale, Part 2: Queer History beyond the City: Sexuality in 19th- and Early 20th-Century Rural America**

*Mile High Ballroom 1A (Colorado Convention Center, Ballroom Level)*

**Chair:**

Colin R. Johnson, Indiana University  
Bloomington

**Papers:**

“How Big a Scale Should the History of Sexuality Cover? Cases of Sexual Slander in America’s Early Republic”  
Kent W. Peacock, Florida State University  
“Rural, Queer, Settler: Astrid Arnoldsen’s

Montana, c. the 1920s”  
Emily E. Skidmore, Texas Tech University

“Laying It All on the Table: Scaling up Rural Queer History from Small-Town Wisconsin to Transnational Queer Networks”  
Christopher Hommerding, University of Wisconsin–Madison

**Comment:**  
Gabriel N. Rosenberg, Duke University

**1:30-3:00pm – Queering Historical Scale, Part 3: Queering Femininity: Gender Normativity and Lesbian History**  
*Mile High Ballroom 1A (Colorado Convention Center, Ballroom Level)*

**Chair:**  
Lauren Gutterman, University of Texas at Austin

**Papers:**

“‘Pass Right By Your People’: Femme Invisibility and Postwar Lesbian History”  
Alix Genter, The College of New Jersey

“‘Plagued with Unconscious Homosexual Cravings’: Queer Femininities, Latent Lesbianism, and Postwar American Sexual Culture”  
Amanda H. Littauer, Northern Illinois University

“‘Traucherous Sweetness’: Interwar College Girls, Lesbianism, and the Specter of Unchecked Femininity”  
Anastasia Jones, University of Toronto

**Comment:**  
Lauren Gutterman, University of Texas at Austin

**2:00-4:00pm – Tour 14: Colorado LGBT History Archives Tour and Presentation, Denver Public Library**  
*Room 103 (Colorado Convention Center, Meeting Room Level)*  
Please sign up when you register for the annual meeting. Limit: 15.

**3:30-5:00pm – Queering Historical Scale, Part 4: Querying Metanarratives of Queer History in Modern Germany**  
*Mile High Ballroom 1A (Colorado Convention Center, Ballroom Level)*

**Chair:**  
April Danielle Trask, Amherst College

**Papers:**

“To Finally Let Fall the Burdensome Mask: The Queer Politics of Carnival in Early 20th-Century Germany”  
Christina Carmen Chiknas, Rutgers, The State University of New Jersey

“West German Gay Liberation: Escaping the Stonewall ‘Metanarrative’”  
Craig Griffiths, City University London

“The Afterlives of Sexual Evidence: New Uses for Old Sources in Nazi Germany”  
Matthew Conn, Michigan State University

**Comment:**  
Svanur Petursson, Rutgers, The State University of New Jersey

**SUNDAY, JANUARY 8**

**9:00-10:30am – California Rewrites Its K–12 History**  
*Mile High Ballroom 1A (Colorado Convention Center, Ballroom Level)*

**Chair:**  
Nancy J. McTygue, California History-Social Science Project, University of California, Davis

**Papers:**

“Overseeing California’s Framework Revision”  
Nancy J. McTygue, University of California, Davis;  
Bill Honig, California Department of Education;  
Thomas Adams, California Department of Education

“The Process of Updating History”  
Beth Slutsky, University of California, Davis



“Scholar Advocacy and Incorporating the FAIR Education Act”

Don Romesburg, Sonoma State University

**11:00am-12:30pm – Incorporating LGBT History into the US Survey: A Roundtable Discussion**

*Mile High Ballroom 1A (Colorado Convention Center, Ballroom Level)*

*Cosponsored by the AHA Teaching Division*

**Chair:**

Amanda H. Littauer, Northern Illinois University

**Panel:**

David D. Doyle, Southern Methodist University

Catherine O. Jacquet, Louisiana State University

Jen Manion, Amherst College

Kevin J. Mumford, University of Illinois at Urbana-Champaign

## Book Reviews

**Nicole Albert, *Lesbian Decadence: Representations in Art and Literature of Fin-de-Siècle France*, trans. Nancy Erber and William A. Peniston (New York: Harrington Park Press, 2016).**

**Gretchen Schultz, *Sapphic Fathers: Discourses of Same-Sex Desire from Nineteenth-Century France* (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 2015).**

Since Michel Foucault published the first volume of *The History of Sexuality* in 1976, his understanding of sexuality as a cultural construct has been central to the field of gay and lesbian studies. Foucault’s claim that the notion of individual sexual identity, labeled as either normative or deviant, originated in eighteenth and nineteenth-century Europe has proven especially fruitful. Scholars today continue to explore the discourses surrounding non-normative sexuality from this formative period. Two excellent, thought-provoking, and complementary studies—Nicole Albert’s *Lesbian* CLBTH Fall 2016

*Decadence* and Gretchen Schultz’s *Sapphic Fathers*—examine the birth of the lesbian as a person and a character, a threat and a fantasy in France during the second half of the nineteenth century.

First published in French in 2005, Nicole Albert’s *Lesbian Decadence* aims to explain the cultural obsession with sapphism in France during the fin de siècle, here described as “the golden age of the lesbian” (xii). For Albert, the omnipresent mythical lesbian was “demonized and poeticized at the same time” because of her association with decadence (xix). Rather than a peripheral literary and artistic movement, decadence is seen here as the key to the zeitgeist of the entire century from 1830 to 1930. Decadent aesthetic pursuit of the unnatural, artificial, and unattainable made the figure of the lesbian a perfect metaphor for “absolute, unique, and total nothingness” (235). In her eschatological nihilism, she functioned not only as the embodiment of evil, but also an “alter ego of the artist” (276), indeed the “heroine of modernity” (307).

This argument works best when applied to the decadent canon, as opposed to works reflecting other aesthetic currents such as romanticism or naturalism. But there is much more to Albert’s book than her thesis. Indeed, its great merit is to provide a virtually exhaustive survey of contemporary sources depicting lesbians across all genres and traditions, especially non-canonical literary ones. Albert organizes her abundant materials into three main parts, divided in turn into twelve chapters.

Part I takes its title from a recollection by man of letters Arsène Houssaye: “At that time, Sappho was reborn in Paris...” Three chapters examine in turn: the resurrection of Sappho’s myth in the mid-nineteenth century; the appropriation of Sappho’s myth by poets from Baudelaire to Renée Vivien by way of Verlaine, Swinburne, and Pierre Louÿs; and the topography of lesbian Paris in fin-de-siècle literature and art. The third chapter makes the important point that Paris-Lesbos, from Montmartre to the Bois de Boulogne and the suburban banks of the Seine,

“has to be understood as more than the figment of predominantly male, overactive imagination. It was also a set of real practices” (63), hence the challenge for male authors of “tracking down women’s itineraries” (64). Then as today, bars played an important role in “the development of a sense of community that was evident to onlookers” (70).

Part II describes “Her Traits, Her Vices, and Her Sexual Aberrations,” in the words of a lesbian-obsessed author from 1897. The five chapters in this section address the Foucauldian metamorphosis of sapphism from a practice into an identity, a process apparent in both medicine and popular culture. Images of hybridity, androgyny, and hermaphroditism, viewed as the ultimate symptom of the decline and fall and civilization, reflect the crisis of masculinity and virulent anti-feminism characteristic of the fin de siècle. At the same time, in the hands of lesbians, they engendered a new sexual imagination and language of female eroticism.

The four chapters in Part III—“Damned Women or Exquisite Creatures?”—make the case for the lesbian as decadent heroine, inspiring both violent hatred and secret admiration. The themes of “Deadly Pleasures,” “The Half-Women,” “Female Narcissus,” and “Female Spaces, Male Gaze” are reminiscent of those considered in *Idols of Perversity*, Bram Dykstra’s classic study of feminine evil in decadent iconography and literature. All three parts of Albert’s book are handsomely illustrated with both black-and-white images and color plates.

Taking Albert’s study as a starting point, in *Sapphic Fathers* Gretchen Schultz covers similar terrain but makes a different argument. Like Albert, Schultz seeks to explain the obsession with lesbianism in late nineteenth-century France, particularly among male authors. For Schultz, the period 1850-1900 was characterized by polarized gender expression and distinct sexualities, as distinguished from romanticism’s earlier valorization of androgyny and ambiguity. In an implicit critique of Albert, for whom decadence provides an overarching framework, Schultz claims, “the phenomenon of the

phantasmal lesbian must be attributed to a complex of issues rather than reduced to one” (4). She describes a “confluence of discourses and representations impelled by disparate factors and having potentially divergent ideological stakes” (187). Each of Schultz’s first four chapters identifies a particular lesbian narrative: in poetry, popular fiction, elite fiction, and scientific discourse. She makes no attempt to be exhaustive here, presenting instead close readings of a few texts in each category.

“The Poetics of Lesbian Identification” describes two “male quests for selfhood” in which the lesbian functions as the poet’s alter ego (29). For Baudelaire, she represented “shared social marginality and moral abjection,” leading him to celebrate and vilify her at the same time (44). Verlaine, in contrast, used lesbianism as a cover for male homoeroticism, permitting him to deliver “a vindication for and sacralization of homosexuality” (57).

Far from the self-absorption of lyric poetry, the crowded world of popular fiction combined male voyeurism with an anti-feminist agenda when portraying lesbians. Schultz explores both through a case study of Adolphe Belot, the author of nearly thirty plays and fifty commercial novels in about thirty years, many of them lesbian-themed. Her discussion of lesbians in elite fiction foregrounds not titillation but the trope of degeneration, in addition to the virulent anti-feminism shared by male novelists of all stripes. Unlike Albert, she distinguishes carefully between naturalists and decadents among elite writers, particularly with regards to their class politics. While naturalists portrayed lesbians as lower-class prostitutes, contaminating the social order from below, decadents saw lesbianism as the sign of a decaying aristocracy. Unfortunately, Schultz’s criteria for differentiating elite from popular literature are not always clear. Some authors she considers, such as Catulle Mendès, arguably straddle the two.

Schultz’s fourth chapter, “Scientia Sapphica,” examines the origins of scientific discourse on lesbianism, which justified punitive moral regulation—up to and including genital

mutilation—under the pretense of objectivity. Like Albert, she highlights the interpenetration of literary and scientific representation.

In her fifth and final chapter, Schultz claims that despite having “little or no correlation with historic persons or lived reality,” these multiple lesbian narratives “nonetheless quite likely contributed to the formulation of identities” (5). A very brief section subtitled “Paris-Lesbos” references “the fairly sudden apparition of subjective homoerotic literature at the turn of the century” (190) while ignoring earlier lesbian literary voices.

Beyond the appropriation and reinvestment of representations by a lesbian literary elite, Schultz wants to get at “the impact of such texts on common readers” (193). She assumes that no direct evidence survives from fin-de-siècle France, although the press in fact described self-identified lesbians reacting to books and performances. Instead she delves into the reception of American lesbian pulps in the 1950s—hence the jarring cover image, which has nothing to do with nineteenth-century France. Schultz makes a good case for the double audience of later pulps: male consumers and women in search of a language for their sexual desires. Using oral history and autobiography, she shows that the “unintended” lesbian audience found “mirrors for their difference” in the pulps and consumed them avidly (225).

Schultz’s overall contention that male-authored sapphic discourses are largely “the result of speculation or invention, rather than personal observation” of queer or lesbian life is more problematic (9). Although she recognizes the pertinence of biography, she is reluctant to connect texts to the identities or experiences of their authors, even where these are manifestly relevant. Only in the case of Verlaine does Schultz describe lesbianism as “a cipher for male homosexuality” (63), but the same could be said of many other sapphic fathers she discusses.

As for Baudelaire, Schultz focuses on the place of sapphism in his aesthetic agenda but omits his personal life—including his bisexual lover, Jeanne Duval—from her analysis.

Nor was Baudelaire alone among sapphic fathers in having intimate acquaintance with lesbians. Both heterosexual voyeurs like Maupassant and Toulouse-Lautrec and closeted homosexuals like Louÿs and Mendès counted lesbians among their closest friends and lovers. At least two novels discussed in Schultz’s third chapter—Péladan’s *La Gynandre* and Mendès’ *Méphistophéla*—clearly had their origins in lived experience. *La Gynandre* came out in 1891, the year Péladan unsuccessfully courted lesbian painter Louise Abbéma. The lesbian associations he describes, far from being fantasies, are modeled on real ones; the club he calls the Orchidées refers transparently to the Oeillet Blanc, an occult society of women artists and writers that met in Abbéma’s studio. For its part, *Méphistophéla* transposes the failure of Mendès’ relationship with composer Augusta Holmès, who left him for a woman in 1886 over his demand that she sacrifice her career to raise their children. Mendès published the work in 1890, the year after Holmès reached the pinnacle of professional success as composer and choreographer for the opening pageant of the World’s Fair.

Of course, works of art and literature do not merely reflect reality, but as Albert demonstrates in her discussion of lesbian topography, sometimes they do. As a social historian, I seek primarily to elucidate the lived contexts in which discourses are produced, and excavate evidence of the actual communities that evolved in tandem with the mythic imagination. Historians interested in cultural and intellectual history will find both of these books indispensable to understanding the epistemological shift that took place within Western thinking about sexuality in the nineteenth century.

-Leslie Choquette,  
*Institut français, Assumption College*

**Marlon M. Bailey, *Butch Queens Up in Pumps: Gender, Performance, and Ballroom Culture in Detroit* (Ann Arbor: University of Michigan Press, 2013).**

Popular images of Ballroom culture often consist of twirling bodies pantomiming to house tracks in basements tucked away in New York's underground. This notion, in part, is due to Jennie Livingston's popular 1990 documentary *Paris is Burning*. In *Butch Queens Up in Pumps: Gender, Performance, and Ballroom Culture in Detroit*, Marlon M. Bailey complicates such images by examining Ballroom culture in contemporary Detroit. Balls, events in which members compete, or "walk," in a variety of categories, serve as one of the foundations of the Ballroom scene. These performance categories are dictated by a nuanced gender and sexuality system that structures members' identities. However, Bailey argues that the significance of Ballroom culture runs deeper than competition for trophies. Instead, Bailey argues, Ballroom culture creates an alternative world through a variety of interpersonal networks that support disenfranchised black LGBT people in Detroit.

*Butch Queens Up in Pumps* explores the survival strategies of black LGBT people through lenses of gender, labor, and kinship. Drawing on oral interviews with House members and "performance ethnography," as Bailey analyzes his own Ballroom performance, alongside that of his fellow competitors. Through this method, Bailey documents community practices of the Detroit Ballroom scene and examines what they mean for its members.

Bailey begins by situating Ballroom culture within the longer history of black queer and gender nonconforming people in Detroit since the 1940s. In doing so, he positions this contemporary community alongside a long tradition of black people creating culture and belonging outside of the mainstream. The system of gender and sexual categories used in Ballroom culture is complex, and provides possibilities for identity beyond the binaries of male/female and or gay/straight. This system, Bailey argues, was developed by black queer people in Detroit out

of a need to create alternative spaces for themselves. Through this system, Bailey theorizes "realness"—which in the Ballroom scene describes how well a competitor embodies their particular category—as the way the presentation of the body creates identity. He argues that realness simultaneously highlights the constructedness of identity as well as members' self-conscious performances of gender and sexuality. Indeed, the work of realness, in Bailey's view, is to highlight the multiple possibilities of constructing gender and sexuality. However, while there is perhaps greater fluidity within the Ballroom gender and sexuality system, he contends that these forms of identification can nevertheless reify dominant gender norms.

Bailey builds upon this conceptualization of gender performance and identity through his notion of "housework." He derives this term from the houses that make up the Ballroom scene. Each house is composed of a number of children and a housemother or housefather who mentors them. Bailey describes housework as "the kin labor... Ballroom members undertake to develop and maintain these familylike units" (80). For Bailey, housework organizes the Ballroom scene through the performances that both support members and create the events where they negotiate their identities. He notes that the balls are produced by two types of labor: the physical labor that transforms a lodge or conference center into a ballroom, and the social labor of assigning appropriate tasks to each member of the house. The housemother or housefather delegates tasks to their charges as part of this collective effort, and the children who have participated the longest are given the most responsibility. Bailey argues that this replication of a family structure reinforces kinship as central to the Ballroom community. Drawing from Judith Halberstam's work on queer space, Bailey shows that black queer house members transform exclusionary spaces into ones that actively "support their non-normative sexual identities, embodiments, and community values and practices" (146). Through housework, the Ballroom community thus affirms the lives of its members.

Bailey's examination of labor and gender performance together through housework ultimately gestures toward the role of kinship in maintaining and supporting black LGBT people. Much of this analytical work is found in his discussion of the politics of HIV/AIDS, as Bailey argues that "strategies for HIV/AIDS prevention already exist within the Ballroom community and culture" (26). While the Ballroom scene offers entertainment, it also generates knowledge about HIV/AIDS through "prevention balls"—annual events sponsored by various organizations dedicated to educating black LGBT people about HIV/AIDS. Speaking both to the stigma of HIV/AIDS and the relative lack of culturally specific approaches to prevention for black communities, members of the Ballroom scene provide information via these balls to combat disproportional levels of HIV transmission among black LGBT people. In this way, prevention balls reinforce the House system as a site of both social support and knowledge production. Balls and the performances that structure them are indeed much more than entertainment or competition; they are integral to the survival of the community.

Although Bailey positions Ballroom culture within the longer history of black LGBT communities, *Butch Queen Up in Pumps* is not a history of the Ballroom scene. At times, the larger context in which the balls developed fades into the background, as Bailey focuses on the particularities of these cultural formations. While Detroit is the central site in the study, a specifically historical approach might read this Ballroom culture more intimately within the city's history of racial stratification. Such an approach could further open possibilities for comparative work regarding cultural production by urban queers of color in the United States.

However, while Bailey's ethnographic approach is not principally historical in nature, his repositioning of the Ballroom scene as productive labor—rather than mere spectacle—and his centering of blackness as the position that informs the production of this culture marks a critical intervention in LGBT studies.

CLBTH Fall 2016

Showcasing Ballroom's complex, interwoven, and mutable performances of race, gender, sexuality, and kinship, Bailey provides a narrative that has implications far beyond Detroit. As questions of gender and embodiment become more prevalent across various fields, and notions of identity become less fixed, *Butch Queens Up in Pumps* provides a useful account of both the way identities are produced via performance and their political implications. Although performance ethnography may not be a methodology suited to all disciplines, Bailey's questions surrounding the politics of the Ballroom scene make important contributions to the intertwined histories of gender, sexuality, and race.

-C.L. Green

University of Illinois at Urbana-Champaign

**Ben Eshleman, Jess Wiltey, Charlie Backus, and Maxwell Harvey-Sampson, [Trans Rochester Speaks](#) (Rochester Institute of Technology, 2016)**

In recent years, transgender people have received more public attention than ever before. Laverne Cox's 2014 appearance on the cover of *Time*, for an article titled "The Transgender Tipping Point," stands out as particularly significant. In this new atmosphere of trans visibility, undergraduate students at the Rochester Institute of Technology in Rochester, New York have created *Trans Rochester Speaks*, a digital exhibit showcasing local trans history as early as the 1970s. Using six oral histories, supplemented by archival research, the website highlights a tradition of trans social life, activism, and culture in Rochester that has continued through to the present. The project team consisted of students Ben Eshleman, Jess Wiltey, Charlie Backus, and Maxwell Harvey-Sampson, as well as Dr. Tamar Carroll, a professor of history at RIT and the project's faculty advisor.

The landing page for *Trans Rochester Speaks* positions the project as a "dialogue in community history" celebration of the trans life in the city. The bulk of the site is divided into a number of sections: People, Topics, Impressions, Timeline, Resources, and Glossary. The People



section functions as the center of the exhibit, presenting oral history excerpts from four women and two men who share their experiences of being trans in Rochester. The interviews cover topics such as identity formation and coming out, healthcare, their relationship—often contentious—between gay/lesbian and trans activists, and experiences with participating in trans groups, both locally and online. Several participants also comment on parenthood, and both men discuss their experiences with lesbian organizing. These interviews are valuable for the way they reveal personal perspectives on identity and community, and offer insights into Rochester's local history.

Each interview is edited down to between twenty and thirty minutes, and is presented as a series of short audio clips with titles and descriptions, but no transcripts. This focuses the user on the orality of the interviews, but also limits the site's accessibility for hearing-impaired visitors. Sound quality in the interviews varies—there is a TV or radio playing in the background of one interview—but in general the clips are high in quality with minimal interruptions. Large photographs of the narrators accompany most clips, conveying a sense of pride and immediacy rather than a disembodied or distant voice. The People section also offers profiles of trans women who appeared in *The Empty Closet*, Rochester's LGBT newspaper, during the 1970s. Since the interviews mostly address the 1980s through the 2000s, these earlier profiles allow the project to extend its coverage of Rochester's trans history further back in time. However, even with these additions, almost all of the people featured on the site are middle class, white, and politically active. The website acknowledges this shortcoming and points out that future research could expand the conversation. However, in its current iteration, *Trans Rochester Speaks* celebrates a limited range of trans experiences.

The remainder of the website contextualizes the oral histories, tying them to a national trans narrative and offering avenues for further research. The Topics section sorts the oral  
CLBTH Fall 2016

history clips into thematic playlists, such as "Political Involvement" and "Visibility," offering users another way to navigate through the interview material. The Impressions section offers a narrative of trans history since the 1970s. Here visitors learn about both local and national trans movements visibility, dignity, and acceptance. The titles of these sections can be confusing, which is a liability when visitors can click away from an online exhibit at any time. One might reasonably assume Topics to offer thematic interpretations of the site's material, and Impressions seems an odd title for the section of the site containing the project's main historical synthesis. A future version of the site might combine the People and Topics sections, making clear that they contain the same oral history material.

The remaining sections—Timeline, Resources, and Glossary—also serve to place Rochester's trans history in a national context, and point curious visitors toward opportunities for further research. The timeline, adapted from the *New York Times*, combines local city and state events with national developments, from Christine Jorgensen's sex-change surgery in 1952 to New York Governor Andrew Cuomo's executive order protecting trans rights issued in January 2016. The Resources section offers academic context for the website, with links to books trans history and oral history methods, other trans oral history projects, and archives of *The Empty Closet*, which happens to be one of the longest running LGBT newspapers in the United States. Finally, the glossary contains entries for relevant terms such as "cisgender" and "dysphoria," as well as for specific organizations such as Genesee Valley Gender Variants and Tri-Ess. For those organizations that are still in operation, such as ACT UP New York, the entry includes a link to the group's website.

While the project has value as a historical source, it also functions an example of a well-conceived digital exhibit. Public history often depends on design for an effective presentation, especially in an online setting where visitors are self-directed. *Trans Rochester Speaks* has an inviting, immersive structure, eliminating sidebars or

pop-ups. Instead, users navigate the site via a header bar, or simply by scrolling down the project page. In line with current best practices, the navigation bar highlights the visitor's position in relation to the site as a whole, and allows them to jump around the site's contents. The Resources section further enriches the user experience. Unfortunately all this work becomes a jumble when viewed on a mobile device; an app or responsive site design would not necessarily be the best option in this case, but the project would benefit from an automatic notification informing mobile users that the site functions best on a larger screen.

*Trans Rochester Speaks* offers a number of contributions to queer history as a whole. The material gives visitors insight into the local history of trans activism in Rochester, and points toward a richer national trans history that includes regions like upstate New York. By showing how Rochester residents lived and conceived of themselves in past decades, the project's oral histories contextualize modern trans identity politics. The choice to divide the interviews into discrete segments will also make the site useful for instructors who want to bring trans history into the classroom. The project is consistently respectful of the narrators and keeps its focus on their voices, while remaining accessible for a general public that may be new to trans history or trans studies. In spite of a few design problems and a relatively small pool of oral history narrators, *Trans Rochester Speaks* offers a good example of an effective digital exhibit and a standout undergraduate project.

-Hannah Givens, University of West Georgia

**Susan C. Seymour, Cora Du Bois:**  
***Anthropologist, Diplomat, Agent* (Lincoln, NE: University of Nebraska Press, 2015).**

Lesbian and gay people lead both ordinary and extraordinary lives, with multiple sources of identity shaping their experience. Susan C. Seymour's highly readable biography of anthropologist Cora Du Bois brings this reality into sharp relief, embedding her life in the historical and intellectual contexts of her time. Du Bois was a pioneer of what is now known as

CLBTH Fall 2016

psychological anthropology (then called culture and personality studies), a contemporary of such celebrated scholars as Margaret Mead, and one of the first generation of influential women anthropologists. She did research in Southeast and South Asia before such work was common in anthropology, and because of her expertise was recruited during World War II to work for the Office of Strategic Services (OSS). During the early Cold War, she worked in Washington, DC as a Southeast Asia specialist for the State Department, before finding her way back into academic life, as the first woman to be tenured as a full professor at Harvard. Along the way, her life intersected with the political and cultural developments of the day, as both her gender and sexuality as a lesbian presented obstacles to her career.

Du Bois' lesbianism only occasionally seemed to be the major factor in determining her professional choices; for most of her career she simply followed her interests, and was able to carve out a significant niche in the emerging field of culture and personality studies. Du Bois was born in 1903, and completed her bachelor's degree at Barnard College before going on to do her doctoral studies at UC Berkeley. There she worked under such noted anthropologists as Alfred Kroeber and Robert Lowie, who were themselves part of the first generation of anthropologists trained by Franz Boas at Columbia. The directions she took in the early years after receiving her PhD in 1932 were largely determined by her difficulties securing a faculty position as a woman. She did, however, win a prestigious fellowship from the National Research Council that brought her to Harvard to study psychiatry with Abraham Kardiner. Her desire to test out some of the ideas she had developed during her clinical training then took her to the island of Alor, in what is now Indonesia. Based on her lengthy fieldwork there, she produced *The People of Alor*, an influential ethnographic work on the relationship between personality and culture.

During her service with the OSS during World War II, Du Bois formed a relationship with Jeanne Taylor, an artist also working with the

agency in Ceylon, which lasted until Du Bois' death in 1991. Although the two were relatively visible as couple during Du Bois' Harvard years, the relationship caused considerable difficulty during the Red Scare of the 1950s. While working for the State Department after World War II, both Du Bois' lesbianism and opposition to US military involvement in Southeast Asia made her a target of the red-baiters intent on rooting out "disloyalty" in the State Department. Du Bois decided to return to academia, but rampant redbaiting presented obstacles there as well. She was offered a position at UC Berkeley, which she had often described as her dream job, but turned down the position rather than compromise her principles by signing the loyalty oath required by the university. Not long after, in 1954, she was appointed to an endowed professorship for distinguished woman scholars at Harvard and Radcliffe, becoming the first tenured woman to serve at the former institution. As such, her presence stirred up misogyny among Harvard colleagues who resented her presence and strove to maintain the college's all-male environment. Her years at Harvard were littered with slights and affronts, including a salary that was markedly lower than those of her male peers, which in turn led to a precarious retirement and considerable bitterness about the shabby treatment she endured.

Despite her committed domestic relationship with Taylor, Du Bois had an intense affair with the writer May Sarton during the late 1950s, which ended due to professional obligations—she spent a year at the Center for Advanced Study in the Behavioral Sciences at Stanford—as well as Du Bois's reluctance to inflict pain on Taylor. Later to become a feminist literary icon, Sarton immortalized her relationship with Cora in many poems and in the novel, *Mrs. Stevens Hears the Mermaids Singing*, in which she modeled the main character's lover on Du Bois. Seymour's biography, inspired by her own time as one of the subject's graduate students, ably situates Du Bois' life in the intersecting domains she inhabited. As the daughter of immigrants to the US, she maintained ongoing ties with her European relatives, often sending them financial

CLBTH Fall 2016

assistance even when she could ill afford such generosity. As a woman, she had to contend with the prevailing gender biases of the academy, although she seems never to have doubted the rightness of her intellectual path. Seymour's biography makes clear how Du Bois's life and work were embedded in the intellectual and political trends of the time even as she questioned and expanded the direction of her discipline. Her work during World War II and for the State Department exemplifies a kind of service anthropology performed for the nation when doing so did not present the kinds of ethical problems that discouraged later scholars from serving in such capacities. While Du Bois seemed to take her sexuality for granted in a way that later activists have found difficult, her situation as a lesbian reflects the artful dance between openness and discretion that marked how gay women managed their lives in the mid-twentieth century. She paid a price for loving women, but didn't seem to think she deserved to demand different treatment—another indication of the time in which she lived.

Other scholars have produced biographies of LGBT scholars whose research agendas were more clearly shaped by their sexual orientation, but we know less about those whose careers were further removed from the study of gender and sexuality. These lives warrant further investigation: not all gay or lesbian scholars use their own identities as the starting point for academic research. DuBois's career was defined in large part by a particular historical moment, but other LGBT scholars working in more recent times have similarly not seen sexual identity as key to their intellectual work. Their professional paths may be illuminated by DuBois's story, even as the price we pay for being LGBT is far less onerous than it once was.

-Ellen Lewin  
University of Iowa

**Jennifer Tyburczy, *Sex Museums: The Politics and Performance of Display* (University of Chicago Press, 2016).**

Historians fetishize the archive. We theorize its absences and silences. We romanticize our

fervent digging in dusty files. We uphold hierarchies of scholarship in which work without archival research is politely brushed aside as “synthetic”—devoid of the raw source materials of history. Sometimes, we even pretend those source materials offer a uniquely unmediated window into history.

However, archive fever is a malady to which the broader public remains almost wholly immune. As Jennifer Tyburczy adroitly observes in her smart, refreshing new book, museums are the sites through which many people produce and consume collective memory. And yet historians, and particularly historians of sexuality, have not given museums the sort of attention that we have lavished upon archives. *Sex Museums* does just that, and offers a profound, generative contribution to the public history of sexuality.

Tyburczy begins with the 2010 controversy over the Smithsonian’s exhibition *Hide/Seek: Difference and Desire in American Portraiture*, in which ambitious queer programming fell prey to a conservative backlash whose “accusations were almost verbatim repetitions” of those made by such antigay reactionaries as Senator Jesse Helms during the 1980s culture wars. Even the target remained the same. The short experimental film *A Fire in My Belly* by David Wojnarowicz, whose work drew the ire of congressional conservatives and right-wing pundits before his death from AIDS-related complications in 1992, was ultimately pulled from the gallery as alleged anti-Christian “hate speech” (xiii). The Smithsonian’s capitulation felt eerily reminiscent of the censorship spearheaded by Helms at the height of the AIDS epidemic, but the controversy also echoed a much longer history. For Tyburczy the *Hide/Seek* episode thus raises a deceptively simple question: “How should we display the history of sexuality?” (175)

Tyburczy’s answer is *queer curatorship*, or a mode of “putting queer theory on its feet.” By this she means that displayed artifacts should not just be contextualized historically, but also in terms of how they represent power relations and the solicitation of desire, in both the past and the

present (180). To demonstrate this point, Tyburczy offers an expansive overview of the theory and history of sexual exhibition. Through a series of case studies both historical and contemporary, she shows that museum practices serve to establish and reinforce normative modes of spectatorship, which queer curatorship promises to interrupt.

By way of example, Tyburczy compares the histories of Gustave Courbet’s painting *L’origine du monde* (1866) and Andrea Fraser’s video installation *Untitled* (2003) to bring into stark clarity the regulation of sexuality and gender through exhibition. Courbet’s work constitutes “the quintessential example of collecting and displaying sex in the public sphere in the West,” its graphic genital peering an apotheosis of what Tyburczy labels “erotic exhibitionism” (42). In contrast, Fraser’s work has often critiqued the capitalist commodification of both art and sexuality. For *Untitled*, she arranged a commission in which she had sex with a male collector, recorded the act, and exhibited the resulting video in a Manhattan gallery. The art world’s response ranged from suppressed anxiety to outright hostility and misplaced whorephobia, and Fraser effectively withdrew *Untitled* from circulation. In comparing the divergent receptions of the two works, Tyburczy reveals the gendered aspects of erotic exhibitionism. Female bodies, it seems, are more acceptably displayed as erotic objects than as subjects.

Tyburczy further argues that, as sites for the cultivation of collective memory, museums “establish taxonomies of normalcy” (11). By extension, they also stigmatize deviance. For example, at the 1937 *Degenerate Art* exhibition in Munich, the Nazi regime displayed sexual perversion in such a way as to maximize affective impact and political effect. The exhibition, with its deliberately bad lighting and framing, and abrasive slogans interspersed with the featured pieces, was intended to leave attendees “overwhelmed, disoriented, and even nauseated,” thus solidifying negative feelings that linked perversity with Modernism and Jewishness (90).

After World War II, such overtly slanderous attacks declined, but Tyburczy is especially attuned to more subtle forms of sexual regulation enacted through cultural display. Here she uses the groundbreaking 1994 New York Public Library exhibition *Becoming Visible: The Legacy of Stonewall* as a case study, highlighting warning signs about “sexually explicit content” as a way to “[manage] not only queer sex but also how museum patrons are made to feel about it,” by creating “an emotional habitus predicated on shame and anxiety” (103, 106). Balancing deft application of theory, including Judith Butler’s concept of implicit censorship, with a detailed account of the exhibition’s planning and execution, Tyburczy expertly shows both the logic and the embodiment of this new mode of mediating sexual display.

Tyburczy next surveys several contemporary sex museums, whose social functions “blur the lines between active and passive sex tourism” within “postindustrial sexual commerce” (129). New York City’s Museum of Sex, established in 2002, offers a successful model of the for-profit museum, arrived at after the New York State Board of Regents rejected its nonprofit charter. MoSex, as it is called, “hovers comfortably” between traditional museum and sex shop, with the museum effectively legitimizing patrons’ consumerist erotic purchases (136). Mexico City’s El Museo del Sexo (MuseXo) pushes these tendencies even further. The now-defunct MuseXo dispensed entirely with the historical and anthropological trappings of the traditional museum (151). Instead, it displayed only commercial products. Tyburczy’s brilliant analysis of these sex objects as “necessary props in the performance of sexual First World-ness” shows how MuseXo worked to modulate post-NAFTA sexuality, creating a homonormative “cosmopolitan queer subjectivity” that rested on tacit valorization of whiteness and obscured Mexico’s own radical queer history (154, 152). Yet the museum also contained its own countervailing narrative, with vernacular *albures*—raunchy jokes that ran as text alongside the displayed artifacts and helped patrons

disidentify with MuseXo’s underlying idea of U.S.-centric sexual modernity. Tyburczy concludes with an applied case study in queer curatorship. She describes her own efforts at Chicago’s Leather Archives and Museum to properly display a leather sword sheath and whip that allegedly derived from an antebellum Louisiana plantation, where their use on slaves was decidedly at odds with the value system of BDSM communities. Furthermore, this took place at an institution *not* renowned by communities of color for its sensitivity to race. After internal staff debate, Tyburczy decided as curator to display the sheath and whip, but with accompanying text that made visible the debate and questioned the relationships of pleasure, power, and consent to histories of racial domination. Using Issac Julien’s short film *The Attendant* (1993) as accompaniment, the exhibit also actively solicited dialogue; indeed, an appreciative response written and signed with a lipstick kiss by Mollena Williams, the self-declared “Perverted Negress” and a leading figure among kinksters-of-color communities, effectively became part of the display and helped set its hermeneutic parameters.

Tyburczy covers a great deal of intellectual ground in *Sex Museum*, and is to be commended for the book’s sheer capaciousness; her analysis is playful, rigorous, transnational in scope, and attentive to detail. However, the book is not without its shortcomings. Tyburczy’s bold introductory claim that “All Museums are Sex Museums” goes unresolved, and she might have fleshed out how those museums that do *not* engage directly with sexuality can still be read through its lens. Moreover, in her wide-ranging discussion, not every analytic tangent fully returns to the fold. Nevertheless, Tyburczy explicitly offers the book as itself a performative exhibition, and in that sense fully achieves her goal: *Sex Museums* leaves the reader slightly dizzy, abuzz with ideas, and excited to apply them.

-Whitney Strub  
Rutgers University–Newark