



# Committee on Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual & Transgender History

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### Committee on LGBT History

**Co-chairs:** Amanda Littauer and Nick Syrett

**Book Review Editor:** Dan Royles

**Newsletter Editor:** April Haynes

## CO-CHAIRS' COLUMN Spring 2016

It is now halfway into our term as co-chairs, and the time has already flown by. As ever, CLGBTH board members continue to help us in all that we do on behalf of the Committee, and members have recently spearheaded a number of efforts themselves. Chief among these was the new mentoring program begun by Cookie Woolner and now former board member Alex Warner. Many pairs of mentors and mentees met up at the most recent AHA or got in touch in the

months that followed; Cookie will be matching up new pairs in the months leading up to the AHA next January so stay tuned for details on that front.

The AHA in Atlanta was a great success, if we do say so ourselves. We sponsored or co-sponsored ten sessions, many within our special "[Queer Migrations](#)" track, which echoed the overall theme of the conference. Amanda also chaired an informative session on publishing in queer history (featuring book and journal editors) and Nick participated in one exploring the outcome of the report by the Task Force on the status of LGBTQ historians. That report outlined a number of areas of concern among queer historians, the most significant of which was that jobs for those focusing on queer history are few and far between. Secondarily respondents reported on a variety of others issues: discrimination on campus and among colleagues; lack of support for queer history classes and/or expectations that simply *being* queer qualified one to teach such a course; as well as difficulties with negative/prejudiced student evaluations and their effect upon tenure cases. The session was profiled in [Perspectives](#), the AHA magazine.

The first and most significant outcome of that report is that the AHA has now appointed a [Committee on LGBTQ History and Historians](#). This committee, like the Committee on Minority Historians or the

Committee on Women Historians, will advocate for LGBTQ-identified historians within the AHA and the profession. It can also work alongside the CLGBTH to cosponsor panels and events at the AHA. The new committee's membership will be appointed by the AHA itself and is currently composed of Susan Ferentinos (public history consultant) as chair, Wallace Best (Princeton), Leah DeVun (Rutgers), James Green (Brown), and Leisa D. Meyer (William and Mary). We are excited that the AHA has listened to the recommendations of the Task Force (itself established partially at the urging of the CLGBTH) and we look forward to working with the new committee to better the climate for queer historians in our profession and queer history on our campuses.

Also at the AHA, we were delighted to award a number of prizes, details of which can be found in the next column and on our [website](#). In brief, Emily Skidmore was awarded the Audre Lorde Prize for best article, with honorable mentions going to Alison Lefkowitz and Christopher Phelps. The Gregory Sprague Prize for best article/chapter/paper by a graduate student was awarded to Abram Lewis, with honorable mention going to Alessio Ponzio. Finally, the Allan Bérubé Prize for best public history project was awarded to Jennifer Tyburczy, and honorable mention to Joshua Burford. Thanks to prize committee members James Green, Stephen Vider, and Chelsea del Rio (Lorde and Sprague) and Amy Sueyoshi, Mark Bowman, and Victor Salvo (Bérubé) for their hard work. We will announce calls for the 2017 John Boswell (book) and Joan Nestle (undergraduate paper) prizes later this summer.

In other news, former CLGBTH Co-Chair Don Romesburg continued work begun during his tenure as co-chair on California's

FAIR Act, which mandates the teaching of the LGBT past in history and social science curricula. Don once again testified alongside other LGBT advocates before the Instructional Quality Commission in Sacramento, which itself will advise the state board of education this month. While the final decision will not be announced until July, the IQC approved nearly all of the recommendations made by the coalition advocating for LGBT history/social science inclusion.

We are now hard at work finalizing the program for the AHA in Denver next year (which will include a tour of Colorado's LGBT Archives at the Denver Public Library), planning for mentoring at that meeting, and maintaining our newly revamped website. Board members have also been developing an online database of queer history archives; working to solidify relationships with other scholarly organizations in the hope that we might co-sponsor sessions at their annual meetings; and there is now talk about a possible CLGBTH conference unto itself. Stay tuned for details in the months to come. In the meantime, enjoy your summer!

*Nick & Amanda*

## Call for Papers

Long Beach Indie Film, Media and Music Conference

[www.longbeachindie.com](http://www.longbeachindie.com)

August 31-September 4, 2016

(Deadline May 6, 2016)

The Long Beach Indie International Film, Media, and Music Festival is looking for scholars, to bring their intellect and energy to our 2016 Film, Media, and Music Conference.

We invite individual papers and full panels representing any topic (e.g. theory, production, history, criticism, preservation, etc.) related to film, television, music, mass communication, digital media, and/or the entertainment industry broadly defined.

We are also issuing a special call for papers interrogating and/or celebrating the theme: "Gender, Race and the Entertainment Industry."

### Prize winners

**Audre Lorde Prize** (for best article in LGBTQ History in 2014 or 2015):

WINNER: Emily Skidmore, "Ralph Kerwineo's Queer Body: Narrating the Scales of Social Membership in the Early Twentieth Century." *GLQ: A Journal of Lesbian and Gay Studies* 20, no. 1-2 (2014): 141-166.

Emily Skidmore's highly original, well-written, and nuanced article examines the life and media portrayal of Ralph Kerwineo, a Wisconsin man (named Cora Anderson at birth) who was put on trial for disorderly conduct when his "true sex" was discovered in the 1910s. Skidmore sensitively examines the intertwined stakes of Kerwineo's queer embodiment, his marriage, and his racial identification (although of African American and Native American descent, he claimed alternately to be Spanish or Bolivian) exploring more broadly how conceptions of citizenship shaped perceptions and practices of masculinity and the possibilities of everyday life. Most uniquely, Skidmore carefully compares discussion of Kerwineo in both the local and national press—revealing how local discourses stressing Kerwineo's productivity clashed with coverage in larger newspapers like the *Washington Post*, which

took Kerwineo's supposed sexual and social deviance for granted. The essay, which appeared in a special *GLQ* issue on the Midwest, makes a major contribution in queer and trans history, not only in revealing stories and lives beyond big cities, but in encouraging scholars to reconsider how the geography of ideas shapes what Regina Kunzel has called the "uneven" history of sexuality and gender in the twentieth century U.S.

HONORABLE MENTION: Alison Lefkowitz, "'The Peculiar Anomaly': Same-Sex Infidelity in Postwar Divorce Courts." *Law and History Review*.

HONORABLE MENTION: Christopher Phelps, "The Closet in the Party: The Young Socialist Alliance, the Socialist Workers Party, and Homosexuality, 1962 – 1970" *Labor: Studies in Working-Class History of the Americas*.

**Gregory Sprague Prize** (for best article/dissertation chapter/book chapter/paper written by a graduate student in 2014 or 2015):

WINNER: Abram Lewis, "We Are Certain of Our Own Insanity": Anti-psychiatry and the Gay Liberation Movement, 1968–1980." *Journal of the History of Sexuality*, 25, No. 1 (January 2016): 83-113.

This essay examines LGBT activism surrounding the American Psychiatric Association's declassification of homosexuality as a mental illness in 1973. While this decision has been celebrated as a critical victory for LGBT rights, Lewis details a significantly more complex narrative. The declassification movement, strongly rooted in homophile politics, found opposition among progressive gays and lesbians who celebrated madness instead. Linking deviance and insanity with non-normative

sexualities empowered a rejection of minority identity politics and a profession encouraging assimilation into an oppressive society. Reading gay liberationist, lesbian feminist, and French intellectual texts, the author reveals this parallel movement as a significant moment of coalitional politics. LGBT activists built upon and joined with feminist, antiracist, anticapitalist, and disability rights activists to celebrate disorder as a site of political possibility. Lewis supports this intervention in queer history with insightful analysis of the implications of the declassification campaign, arguing that the subsequent revision of the Diagnostic and Statistical Manual of Mental Disorders aided the psychiatric profession in reasserting their scientific authority and expanding diagnoses of gender and sexual deviance. The committee was impressed by the article's contribution to queer history and the history of medicine as well as to feminist and disability studies.

HONORABLE MENTION: Alessio Ponzio, "Uomini to Omosessuali. The Homosexualization of the Marchettari in the Italian Popular Discourse (1952-65)."

**Allan Bérubé Prize** (for best work in public history in 2014 or 2015):

WINNER: *Irreverent: A Celebration of Censorship*

Leslie-Lohman Museum of Gay and Lesbian Art | February 19 to May 3, 2015  
Curated by Jennifer Tyburczy

While the art world has increasingly recognized the value of queer works, major museums continue to exclude queer artists. In this powerful exhibit Jennifer Tyburczy positions sex – queer, dissident, and explicit – as central in her celebration of artists such as Alma López, Zanele Muholi, David Wojnarowicz, Robert Mapplethorpe. The exhibit frames censorship as producing

knowledge rather than silencing queer creativity, in its bold display of how queer art, despite tremendous opposition, has refused to remain in the closet.

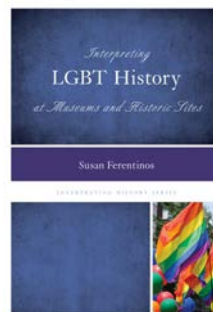
HONORABLE MENTION: *Publicly Identified: Coming Out Activist in the Queen City*  
Levine Museum of the New South | 2014 to 2015

Curated by Joshua Burford

*Publicly Identified* chronicles the history of the LGBT community of Charlotte, NC from the late 1940s to the 2010s. Joshua Burford involved community organizations and initiated an oral history project to create an interactive timeline with an accompanying online presence. The exhibit boosted museum attendance by 16% and initiated the King-Henry-Brockington Collection of queer material at University of North Carolina at Charlotte as well as a regional historical preservation project called OutSouth.

## Announcements from our members

### New in LGBT Public History



Susan Ferentinos, *Interpreting LGBT History at Museums and Historic Sites* (Rowman & Littlefield, 2015). Part of the American Association for State and Local History's series on Interpreting History, Ferentinos's book offers

museum professionals and public historians a starting point for understanding LGBT history in the United States. The book includes an overview of gender-crossing and same-sex love and desire from European contact to the present; case studies of museums who are already working in this

field; and guidance for organizations just beginning to think about LGBT interpretive issues.

Dr. Ferentinos is a member of CLGBTH and currently serves as the chair of the AHA's Committee on LGBTQ History and Historians. We are pleased to announce that *Interpreting LGBT History* has received the 2016 Book Award from the National Council on Public History, which recognizes outstanding contributions to the field of public history.

## BOOK REVIEWS

Book review editor: Dan Royles

### **Robert Beachy, *Gay Berlin: Birthplace of a Modern Identity* (New York: Knopf, 2014).**

Historians of sexuality know that the modern categories of “homosexual” and “heterosexual” have their roots in 19th-century Germany. Karl-Maria Kertbeny, a sex reformer who published pamphlets calling for the repeal of a Prussian anti-sodomy law, coined the term *homosexualität* in 1868. Three decades later, sexologist Magnus Hirschfield advocated for similar legal reform in the German Empire. In *Gay Berlin: Birthplace of a Modern Identity*, Robert Beachy considers the ways that queer social life in Berlin, which was home to both Kertbeny and Hirschfield, shaped modern categories of sexual identity in the English-speaking world. Drawing from an array of sources, including queer periodicals, diaries, correspondence, and medical texts, Beachy argues that the modern conception of sexual orientation as an inherent identity resulted from interactions between Berlin’s medical scientists and sexual minorities. He locates Germany as the center of a discursive shift from gendered notions of “inverts” and “pansies” to the use of “homosexual,” and the more colloquial German *schwul*, to describe

an essential identity. After the First World War, foreign visitors to Berlin’s queer nightlife, such as Christopher Isherwood and W.H. Auden, helped spread the concept to England and the United States.

*Gay Berlin* proceeds through roughly chronological chapters that demonstrate a “feedback loop” between the lived experience of same sex-desiring men and the medical and legal discourse produced about them by sexologists and other experts. Beachy begins with Karl Heinrich Ulrichs, who coined the term *urning* to describe his sexual makeup. The concept of *urning* presaged *homosexualität* in that it described an essential identity, but differed from the latter term in that it described a “third sex” comprising a “feminine” nature in a male body. In contrast, Karl Kertbeny coined *homosexualität* as a rejection of Ulrich’s “psychological hermaphroditism.” Despite their disagreement, the two men corresponded frequently before their deaths and, before German unification in 1871, were part of the first public campaign waged against Prussia’s anti-sodomy statute. In the campaign, Ulrichs and Kertbeny relied on print media to spread their ideas to doctors, jurists, and the public. That literature would later inspire Richard von Krafft-Ebing’s pioneering work on the scientific study of sexuality.

As Beachy makes clear, Germans articulated the notion of *homosexualität* in a variety of ways during the period between unification and the end of the Weimar Republic. Through the Scientific-Humanitarian Committee (SHC) in Berlin, which focused on scientific research, Magnus Hirschfield helped to further refine and popularize theories on homosexuality and sexual orientation. Hirschfield’s Institute for Sexual Science would later pioneer progressive education on a variety of sexual

topics in the Weimar period. A gay sex scandal at the highest levels of imperial government, and ensuing high-profile libel suits, seemed to be a setback for rights activists, but made *homosexualität* a household word in Germany. Outside of the courtroom, the nationalistic and masculine *Männerbund*, or male club, movement presented a new paradigm of homosocial and homoerotic behavior. However, Beachy cautions that this openness should not necessarily be read as acceptance of homosexuality. The rise of the Nazi Party in the 1930s brought with it a sharp turn against homosexual rights and the destruction of Hirschfield's institute.

Chapters two and seven provide the clearest illustration of Berlin as a crucible for gay male identity. The lax enforcement of Paragraph 175, the provision of the German Criminal Code that outlawed sodomy, helped to create a visible gay community in Berlin. The law criminalized homosexual acts, but not homosexual persons. However, since most homosexual acts took place either in private or in the shadows of Berlin's public spaces, enforcement of Paragraph 175 proved difficult. According to Beachy, Berlin's police chief realized that it would be easier to monitor gay social spaces for illegal activity than to prosecute the sex between men that took place in homes and at cruising sites. By allowing bars and nightclubs that catered to gay men, police helped to foster a visible homosexual community, which in turn gave writers and medical professionals a place to study *homosexualität*. This visibility gave Berlin its unique queer subculture. According to Beachy, every major European capital and most major American cities had subcultures of men who desired men, but only Berlin let them exist so openly.

With the economic insecurity that followed the First World War, male

prostitution in Berlin increased, as men sold sex to foreign visitors in exchange for dollars and pounds sterling. Amid the political and social chaos of Weimar Berlin, queer culture also thrived through the proliferation of films, publications, and music by and for gay men. Male tourists from abroad who visited Berlin seeking sex with other men accepted the idea of an essential homosexual identity that they found in Germany. For example, Christopher Isherwood and W.H. Auden described themselves in halting, colloquial German as part of a "tribe" of *schwulen*, or gay men, rather than using the English terms "pansy" and "invert." Men like Isherwood and Auden then carried this newfound sense of sexual self home to England and elsewhere.

Beachy begins *Gay Berlin* with an anecdote about Auden understanding himself as *schwul*, and ends with what he sees as a historical irony: revelers at German gay pride parades celebrating New York's Stonewall Inn as the birthplace of modern gay identity. In between, he takes the reader from the dusty courtrooms where legislators discussed laws regulating sex between men, to the smoky cabarets and bars where those men found one another. Altogether, he moves deftly from the stories of individual men such as Hirschfield and Isherwood to the national and international print culture in which they disseminated modern ideas about homosexuality, demonstrating that the notion of gay identity as we know it today was forged in Berlin between German national unification and the rise of Nazism.

Although he focuses primarily on Berlin, Beachy makes an important transnational intervention in the history of sexuality by uncovering the German roots of the gay identity that spread through the English-speaking world and, later, around the globe. Like George Chauncey's *Gay New York*, John Howard's *Men Like That*, and John

D'Emilio's *Sexual Politics, Sexual Communities*, Beachy thus invites us to think about the contingency of modern categories of sexual identity.

*Jerry Watkins*  
*Georgia State University*

**Rachel Hope Cleves, *Charity and Sylvia: A Same-Sex Marriage in Early America* (New York: Oxford, 2014).**

“On the 3<sup>rd</sup> day of July 1807,...Sylvia Drake consented to be my help-meet and came to be my companion,” wrote Charity Bryant in her 1844 memoir (101). So begins the central chapter in Rachel Hope Cleves’ remarkable reconstruction of Charity and Sylvia’s decades-long “marriage” in early nineteenth-century Weybridge, Vermont. Cleves’ monograph is a remarkable achievement not only because of the author’s painstaking research, but for the way she uses microhistory to tease out broader historical trends in women’s economic roles, the social meaning of marriage, same-sex relationships, and community-building in the rural Northeastern United States. Through a careful reading of Charity and Sylvia’s letters, journals, and poems, Cleves portrays the couple’s relationship as a complex negotiation that enabled them to live as an influential same-sex couple in their community. At the same time, Cleves makes clear that cultural understandings of sexual relationships between women as deviant and sinful exacted an emotional toll on the couple.

According to Cleves, Sylvia and Charity’s relationship demonstrates that “there was more opportunity for the expression of erotic love between women in early America than has previously been believed” (1). To prove her thesis Cleves must find that which has eluded historians of same sex relations: evidence that Charity and

Sylvia were lovers as well as intimate friends. For this evidence Cleves turns to a careful reading of Charity and Sylvia’s letters and poems for expressions of sexual desire and intimacy. Cleves concludes that since the women regarded themselves as married and shared a bed, they were likely engaged in a sexual relationship.

Yet Cleves is not simply trying to demonstrate the existence of same sex relationships in early America. She also seeks to understand the social and cultural conditions that made their relationship possible, and even acceptable, at the time. In the book’s most compelling chapters, Cleves argues that Sylvia and Charity’s “marriage” was intelligible to their community because they conformed to the gender roles associated with a husband and wife. Charity, with her dominating personality and masculine carriage, acted as the household’s head, a role akin to the archetypal female husband in Anglo-American culture. At the same time, Cleves emphasizes that Charity and Sylvia rejected the patriarchal model of coverture. Sylvia retained her legal status as an unmarried woman, and her role as Charity’s “help-meet” resembled earlier New England models of marriage that recognized both partners’ economic role in the household.

While Charity and Sylvia’s household roles conformed to those expected of a married couple, their roles in the Weyfield community as business owners and participants in church life afforded them high status and social acceptance. However, this acceptance was predicated on keeping their relationship an open secret. The emotional cost of that secret was most apparent upon Charity’s death, as Sylvia searched for the words to describe her loss and the nature of their love. The deeply religious couple never reconciled their intimacy and sexual desire

with Christian proscriptions against lesbianism. Cleves notes that “as ‘sisters in Christ’ they loved each other deeply, but as lovers they violated their faith” (165). Unable to undergo confession, both grieved deeply for their own souls and firmly believed in the sinfulness of their desire.

Cleves also situates Charity and Sylvia’s relationship within the larger dimensions of women’s experience in the rural United States during the early nineteenth century. In this way, her work joins recent studies exploring how women navigated the economic changes that attended industrialization and the Market Revolution. In the midst of these changes, many single women became dependent on family members. However, Charity and Sylvia avoided this fate. Charity’s skilled labor as a tailor and business acumen enabled them to maintain a successful business altering clothing throughout their adult lives. During economic downturns, the pair’s willingness to be paid in kind and in labor preserved their business. As a result of their success, young women sought apprenticeships with the couple. Charity and Sylvia developed strong attachments to some of these young women, informally adopting them as stepdaughters. Cleves argues that these relationships, along with those that Charity and Sylvia formed with their nieces and nephews, satisfied their desire to mother without tying them to the constant care of children that so many nineteenth-century American women found emotionally and physically draining.

In this way, Cleves illuminates Charity and Sylvia’s family ties, along with their economic relationships. Cleves argues that Sylvia’s Vermont family accepted Charity and Sylvia as a married couple and that most of their nieces and nephews relied on the couple for nurturance and occasional funds.

Charity and Sylvia offered advice on marriage and courtship, and trained their nieces in tailoring in order to afford them opportunities for economic independence. In return, their nieces and nephews regarded both as “beloved aunts.” However, Charity and Sylvia’s status as a couple caused conflict with other family members. In particular, Charity’s relationship with her father was especially strained, and his rejection haunted her throughout her adult life.

Cleves leaves the reader with both a sense of possibility and sadness. Cleves shows that same-sex couples could find success, and fulfillment, and belonging within rural communities in early America. At the same time, the traumatic effects of family rejection and religious proscriptions against same-sex desire are apparent in Charity and Sylvia’s story. Cleves’ meticulous microhistory alerts us to important nuances in history that are only visible when viewed from the bottom up. Her study is a first-rate narrative that should serve as a model of how to situate individual life stories within larger historical trends.

The detail with which Cleves presents Charity and Sylvia’s story is one of the book’s great strengths. However, general and undergraduate readers may have trouble sorting through family connections and technical discussions of marriage and coverture. This point aside, Cleves work illuminates the limits and possibilities of rural white women’s lives in the early nineteenth-century United States.

*Kathleen Kennedy  
Missouri State University*



**Jim Downs, *Stand by Me: The Forgotten History of Gay Liberation* (New York: Basic Books, 2016).**

In his new book *Stand by Me: The Forgotten History of Gay Liberation*, Jim Downs rebuts the popular view of gay life in the 1970s as one of hedonistic sexual excess. Instead, Downs describes the decade as one of community building among mostly white gay men who organized religious affinity groups, published newspapers, and advocated for gay prisoners. He argues that gay men from New Orleans to Philadelphia, New York, and Los Angeles created a gay identity rooted in moral reasoning that “theorized, explored, and investigated the meaning of sex,” as “many gay people sought community and their own culture over legal rights and political recognition” (5, 14).

Downs begins with the gay religious movement. The Metropolitan Community Church, for example, often used gay nightclubs to hold community services in the daytime. Congregating in public, however, exposed the group to hostilities. Downs uses police records, memoirs, and oral history to recount the June 1973 arson attack on New Orleans’ Up Stairs Lounge, which killed thirty-two and injured fifteen. The apathy that followed the attack showed widespread disregard for the lives of gay people and their families. Still, reformist groups in the 1970s sought inclusion into mainstream religious institutions. Religious advocates such as Father Robert Clement “encouraged their congregations to openly and publicly embrace their sexual orientation” and to see it not as “antithetical to their faith but as central to it” (45). Here Downs challenges the view of gay liberation as a rejection of organized religion. However, he might have buttressed or complicated his analysis by investigating the experiences of Black gay men, who likely organized in more

conservative spaces. While Downs presents a useful corrective to depictions of the 1970s as a decade of sexual excess, his analysis of gay religion only captures the cultural development of a narrow band of religious communities.

After religious advocacy, Downs delves into the vibrant world of gay literature and newspapers. From homophile Craig Rodwell’s Oscar Wilde Memorial Bookstore in Greenwich Village to Jonathan Ned Katz’s early play *Coming Out!* and seminal book *Gay American History*, Downs shows the centrality of letters to gay culture in the 1970s. Still, Downs notes that these spaces remained few and far between compared to gay bars, bathhouses, and pornographic theaters. Despite their overlapping interests, Rodwell and Katz “rarely found themselves in the same room because there were still few rooms where they could meet” (112).

Gay newspapers also offered gay people a way to connect with one another. One of the most far-reaching of these, *The Body Politic*, was founded in 1971 with distribution in the United States, Canada, and parts of Europe. Together with figures like Rodwell and Katz, the gay newspapers sought a “useable past” to “provide legitimacy, meaning, and, most of all, a genealogy to their plight” (116). For example, in 1974 *The Body Politic* ran a series of essays on the history of homosexuality and the Holocaust. While white gay intellectual historians, playwrights, and essayists often gestured towards the Civil Rights Movement as a model for gay liberation, they also looked to Black history as a model for understanding gay oppression. As Downs writes, Katz “interspersed current events” about racism and sexism in *Coming Out!* “to force the majority-white audience—and the majority-white movement—to think about racism” (103). It remains unclear whether Katz achieved his intended effect.

The penultimate chapter of *Stand by Me* most clearly demonstrates how some built coalitions across lines of race and class to offer a more inclusive vision of liberation. Downs finds evidence of solidarity between gay men of different communities in his analysis of prisoners' letters (150-151). According to Downs, "gay inmates reminded the gay community that discrimination and prejudice prevailed inside prisons despite the many changes occurring outside of them" (146). The Metropolitan Community Church published inmates' letters and poetry, including those that described experiences of sexual violence. Downs asserts that poetic exchange "functioned as the 'hidden transcript' of the gay liberation movement" (148). Men victimized by the policing of gay sexuality bonded with others who affirmed their desire for love.

Downs' most novel contribution comes in the concluding chapter. Here, he asserts that the "macho clone" stereotype—clad in Levi's and a flannel shirt, with "broad shoulders, chiseled forearms, biceps the size of cannonballs, and a flat stomach," and always white—led to a masculine vision of gayness that excluded people of color, the feminine, and the gender non-conforming (169). For Downs, the rise of this body type facilitated the decline of anti-racist and intersectional organizing during gay liberation. Evidence for this kind of solidarity between Black and white activists is scant, but perhaps because it was already so short-lived. For this reason, the causal importance Downs assigns to the macho clone seems misplaced. The story of *Stand by Me's* central protagonists and their social worlds remains

a "forgotten history" of white gay men. Nevertheless, Downs' argument is a useful departure from the hypersexualized depiction of gay life in the decade before AIDS. But whose culture was it, anyway?

In reconstructing the social life of the gay Left and its religious reformers, *Stand by Me* ignores the contributions of gay men situated in more conservative settings who lacked the capital to archive their social lives. The fact remains that fewer records exist for Black and working class groups. In a footnote, Downs writes that the book "focuses on the experience of gay white men and does not by any means purport to chart the diverse experiences of the LGBTQ community," continuing, "the preponderance of white men throughout the historical record reflected a shift in how the gay community defined itself at the end of the decade" (n5, 206). Despite the sudden emergence of the homogenized white "macho clone" that Downs blames for declining solidarity between masculine and feminine gay men, the reader is left with little evidence of other social worlds. It is unfortunate that this historical problematic is squirreled away rather than confronted within the analysis. Left in the shadows, anti-racist action on the part of white gay activists and their use of and participation in the Black freedom struggle feels tangential, even though groups like the Gay Activists Alliance and the Black Panther Party frequently debated and collaborated.<sup>1</sup>

*Stand by Me's* core argument, however, remains unassailable. The trauma that persists from the AIDS epidemic has flattened the historical view of gay culture in

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<sup>1</sup> Black Panthers in Oakland were in close contact with the gay liberation movement in San Francisco and invited gay men and lesbians to the 1970 Revolutionary People's Constitutional Conventions in Philadelphia and Washington,

D.C., see Downs, *Stand by Me*, 235n28; Kevin Mumford, *Not Straight, Not White: Black Gay Men from the March on Washington to the AIDS Crisis* (Chapel Hill, N.C.: University of North Carolina Press, 2016), 89-91.

the 1970s. In his research, Downs “saw countless examples of gay people sidestepping activism and putting more effort into creating gay culture” (234, n5). Cultural production and agitation for change remain intertwined. This work raises important questions for future research about how clergy weighed demands for gay inclusion and recognition, how white gay social circles racialized masculinity, and the extent—or limits—of anti-racist organizing during gay liberation. Downs’ book has given historians a rich cultural history, which deserves further, holistic inquiry.

*George Aumoithe  
Columbia University*

**Michael Helquist, *Marie Equi: Radical Politics and Outlaw Passions* (Corvallis: Oregon State University Press, 2015).**

Michael Helquist’s biography *Marie Equi: Radical Politics and Outlaw Passions* tells the compelling life story of Marie Equi, a female physician who pursued both intimate relationships with other women and radical political causes during the early twentieth-century. Equi participated in a wide range of social justice movements, including those for labor rights, women’s suffrage, access to birth control, and against war. While much of Equi’s activism was confined to the Pacific Northwest and Northern California, she maintained connections to other activists across the United States. It is fitting, then, that Helquist weaves together the personal and the political in an intimate telling of Equi’s life that situates her in regional and national histories of the Progressive Era.

Marie Equi’s intimate relationships were exclusively with women. Like historians of nineteenth-century “romantic friendships,” Helquist is careful not to read sexual intimacy into these relationships, since his sources do

not make such behavior explicit. Equi did, however, cohabitate for long periods with a few different women during her adult life. These included Bessie Holcomb, whom Equi met in Massachusetts and shared a home with in Oregon beginning in 1892. While Helquist refers to Equi as a lesbian, it is unclear whether she described herself using that term. Equi did describe herself as “queer,” although Helquist is careful to point out that “queer” at the time still commonly connoted “the unusual or peculiar” in addition to sexual non-normativity (199). Helquist suggests that she may have used the term to describe her radical politics or her sexuality but draws no definitive conclusion on the subject.

In detailing Equi’s relationships with other women, Helquist makes an important contribution to scholarship on female-female sexuality in the Progressive Era. Most histories of homosexuality during this period focus on relationships between men. Although authorities cracked down on male homosexuality in Progressive-era Portland, Equi carried on relationships with other women with relative ease. She did, however, face scrutiny for her private affairs, including in two cases before the Ninth Circuit Court of Appeals. Equi’s life story suggests that Western communities may have provided more opportunities for intimate relationships between women than other parts of the country, although these relationships were still subject to judgment and repression.

*Marie Equi* is not merely a biography, but a chronicle of the Progressive Era, both in the Pacific Northwest and across the United States. Helquist contextualizes every aspect of Equi’s life, connecting her story to the history of settlement in Oregon, the professionalization of medicine, Progressive-era political debates, and public attitudes regarding sexuality. For example, Helquist

describes the restriction of abortion access during the early Progressive Era in order to frame the stakes of Equi's willingness to perform abortions. He also situates Equi's birth control politics alongside those of Margaret Sanger, with whom Equi exchanged intimate personal letters. Helquist aims to demonstrate the role of women in early twentieth-century movements, as well as the role of lesbians in Progressive-era politics in the Pacific Northwest and Northern California. While the extent to which lesbians as a group effected political change is unclear, Helquist shows that Equi and other women activists played a critical role in leftist politics during the Progressive Era.

While Helquist engages much of the political context of the early twentieth century, he fails to directly address the racial politics of the period. For example, Helquist portrays Margaret Sanger's perspective on birth control for the sexual liberation of white women with no mention of her role in the population control movement for working-class women of color. He also makes no mention of Oregon's ban on African-American settlement, which remained in effect until 1926. With respect to Equi's racial politics, Helquist includes only sparse evidence of her beliefs. Piecing together the few moments where Helquist does address race, Equi seems to evolve on racial issues. In the two years before she served time at San Quentin under the Espionage and Sedition Acts for her anti-war activism, Equi described Ireland as "the Only White Nation in Slavery" (158), appealing to the whiteness of the Irish as a reason to support Irish independence. She also requested a public apology "When a Russian Jew comes to this country to sit in judgment of an American woman" (177). While in prison, however, she lived alongside several black women and a Native American woman. Equi's cousin cited racial integration as evidence of poor conditions at San

Quentin, to which Equi protested, "I shrink from no fellow prisoners of mine, no matter what the color of her skin may be" (201). Helquist's failure to tease out Equi's views on race, and to place her in the context of Progressive-era racial politics, represents a missed opportunity for the book.

While *Marie Equi* lacks a central argument, Helquist nonetheless opens up important questions for historians. How did class shape sexual identities and practices during Progressive Era? Did the relationship between class and sex vary from region to region? Were opportunities for same-sex intimacy between women more plentiful in the Northwest? How might a better understanding of female-female relationships change what we know about Progressive-era sexuality? Helquist leaves open these questions, and the story of Marie Equi will hopefully inspire new research on women's activism and sexuality in the Progressive Era.

The biggest strength of *Marie Equi* is its accessibility to a public audience. The writing is clear and Equi's connection to larger historical processes is easy to follow. Helquist's telling of Equi's life also conveys the importance of activism in the face of repression. This book could be an effective reading in undergraduate courses on the history of gender and sexuality, the Progressive Era, American radicalism, labor history, and the history of the Pacific Northwest. While Helquist lacks both a specific argument and an assessment of Equi's legacy, these absences provide an opportunity for students to develop original arguments based on Helquist's evidence. Altogether, *Marie Equi* is an enjoyable read that provides much fodder for discussion.

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**Mary Louise Roberts, *What Soldiers Do: Sex and the American GI in World War II France* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2013).**

Few historians dispute that when the Americans landed in Normandy in the summer of 1944, the French greeted them with open arms. In *What Soldiers Do: Sex and the American GI in World War II France*, Mary Louise Roberts uncovers how American soldiers took advantage of those open arms. Roberts, a professor at the University of Wisconsin-Madison, complicates the myth of the “Greatest Generation” in examining how the United States and France used the sexual body in the struggle for power during the liberation and occupation of French soil by American troops. By focusing on three types of sex—romance, prostitution, and rape—Roberts argues that sexual relationships between American GIs and French women embodied larger issues of political dominance. Power struggles between American and French officials laid bare the “unresolved question of who exactly was in charge,” as the allies worked out their postwar relationship in part through the conflicts over gender and sexuality that marked the American occupation (7).

Many American GIs held an eroticized vision of France. Roberts shows how the military newspaper *Stars and Stripes* represented French women as young, promiscuous, and, perhaps most importantly, desirous of American soldiers. In her most compelling—and humorous—analysis, Roberts compares the German and French phrases that readers could learn from the paper. The German phrases emphasized commands and authority: “No cigarettes!”; “Throw down your arms!”; and “Line up! Forward!” In contrast, the French version leaned towards romance and sex: “You have charming eyes”; “I am not married”; and “Are

your parents home?” (66) Here the paper told U.S. soldiers that they could—and should—charm French women. The soldiers thus came to see themselves in mythic terms, as young heroes rescuing a helpless nation. *Stars and Stripes* also reinforced the idea of France as a sexual outlet for American soldiers through images of the liberating army. Roberts describes the photographic motif of the “manly GI,” a smiling American soldier surrounded by adoring French girls. Such images mythologized the “heterosexual romance” that awaited GIs, and helped them imagine themselves as the masculine rescuers of a feminized France. In this vein, *Stars and Stripes* portrayed the liberation of Paris as an erotically charged event, complete with pictures of French women kissing “manly” American GIs.

If romance characterized the fantasy that American GIs had of French women, then Roberts’ chapters on prostitution reveal a different reality. American soldiers desired sex just as much as French citizens craved commodities lost during the war, and the two parties could make an exchange for what they wanted. After the war, prostitution became more widespread in France, and sexual commerce became a tool of political power as U.S. and French officials disagreed as to how commercial sex should be handled. Before the Nazi invasion, prostitution had been regulated. However, its move to the black market after the war meant that the prostitute became an undefined commodity, as women of all classes began selling sex. Roberts shows that U.S. opposition to legal sex work further helped to create new forms of prostitution that were chaotic and unregulated. French authorities were furious, and wanted to regulate commercial sex, but American officers, in a demonstration of power and arrogance, balked at the idea. The U.S. officials’ stubbornness to work with the French on the regulation of prostitution

served as the blueprint for continued power struggles in post-war France.

In the final third of the book, Roberts uses rape as a lens for examining power dynamics, both within the U.S. military, and between the American occupiers and French civilians. Roberts explores why African American soldiers were disproportionately charged with rape, and contends that the issue stemmed from both racial prejudice in the segregated U.S. military and the attitudes of French civilians. White GIs often framed their black counterparts for crimes, including rape, since they knew that white officers would not view black soldiers as credible. At the same time, French civilians accused black GIs of sexual violence. In this way, black soldiers “quickly became a projection of civilian fears concerning the chaos of war” and of strains with military occupation (197). The U.S. military proceeded swiftly against soldiers accused of rape, precisely to combat such “civilian fears.” Sexual violence had the power to cause substantial damage to U.S. and French relations. By incriminating black soldiers, the U.S. military could at once preserve the myth of the American GI as a white, masculine hero, and displace the blame for the problems of occupation onto black soldiers.

Roberts scrutinizes issues of *Stars and Stripes* alongside French sources to demonstrate a widespread sense of “gender damage” in postwar France (86). More than a “crisis of masculinity,” she argues that during the German invasion and occupation French men felt they had both failed their duties as men, and been stripped of their masculine privilege. This deep sense of emasculation continued after liberation, as French men felt that American GIs had taken control of French women’s sexuality, just as invading German forces had taken control of French territory. Similarly, the struggle between

American and French officials over efforts to regulate sexuality, and particularly venereal disease and prostitution, stood in for the larger struggle to restore French national sovereignty.

Roberts is not the first historian to show that the “good war” may not have been that good, nor is she the first to examine the sexual relations of American soldiers abroad during and after WWII. Nevertheless, *What Soldiers Do* raises new questions in this vein. How did the intertwined struggles over sexuality and national sovereignty in postwar France compare to the experience of other nations? Furthermore, does France’s postwar position as a colonial power complicate Roberts’ argument about a “damaged” French masculinity? In opening up these questions, Roberts challenges her readers to reconsider historical global power relations in terms of gender and sexuality. Diplomatic and military historians as well as scholars of women’s, gender, and sexuality studies will appreciate Roberts’ sophistication. She has written a military history through the lens of gender and sexuality, and in so doing, made an important contribution to both areas of study.

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**Clare Sears, *Arresting Dress: Cross-Dressing, Law, and Fascination in Nineteenth-Century San Francisco* (Durham: Duke University Press, 2015).**

Clare Sears’ latest book, *Arresting Dress*, offers a groundbreaking study of cross-dressing laws in nineteenth-century San Francisco. Sears reveals the prevalence of gender non-normative dress in gold rush California prior to the passage, by the San Francisco Board of Supervisors, of an 1863 law that banned cross-dressing. The new statute marked cross-dressers as public

nuisances, similar to drunks, vagrants, and prostitutes. Thus when John Roberts was arrested in 1874 in San Francisco's Barbary Coast for dressing like a "pretty waiter girl," in a striped dress and flowery straw hat, he appeared in court next to individuals arrested for begging, vulgarity, drunkenness, and assault and battery (8). By defining cross-dressing as aberrant behavior, the law empowered police to harass gay men, lesbians, and transgender people, along with others who violated norms of gender presentation. Officials continued to enforce public gender and sexual boundaries in this way until the Board of Supervisors repealed the law in 1974. Sears concludes that the cross-dressing law, along with similar statutes in twenty-one states, created "new presumptions of cross-gender criminality and a gender-normative public that continue to haunt us today" (147).

In the book's introduction, Sears proposes combining elements of transgender and queer studies to create "trans-ing analysis," a new theoretical approach for examining the history of cross-dressing. This mode of analysis examines a broad range of cross-dressing practices, and allows a deeper examination of the boundaries between normative and non-normative gender identities and representations. Sears also introduces the concept of "problem bodies" to describe the ways that individuals were identified as threats to the existing social structure. Prostitutes; Chinese immigrants; and deformed, diseased, and cross-dressing individuals were frequently identified as problematic because of their gender, race, sex, disability, or citizenship status. By juxtaposing these "problem bodies" in her analysis, Sears "shows that cross-dressing laws were not an isolated or idiosyncratic act of government but one part of a broader legal matrix that was centrally concerned with boundaries of sex, race, citizenship, and city

space" (10). Thus, boundary-crossing individuals were labeled as public nuisances; objectified; and reclassified as non-human others subject to relocation, concealment or confinement. The removal of these non-conforming individuals from the public sphere banished divergent forms of gender expression to the private realm.

Sears begins by considering how the *laissez-faire* years of the California gold rush opened a space for the development of femininities and masculinities that included cross-dressing practices. These included men who dressed as women at gold rush balls, cross-dressing sex workers, and women who donned men's clothing and pursued exclusively male careers. Sears explains that some of these practices carried non-transgressive meanings and actually reinforced existing gender norms. Still, the lawless atmosphere of the gold rush years permitted diverse cross-dressing practices.

By the early 1850s, concern about regulating public decency gave rise to laws designed to enforce the social and moral order as defined by an elite class of landowning European-American men. Laws against cross-dressing were passed alongside those regulating the visibility of prostitution, since female prostitutes sometimes dressed in male attire to attract customers. The 1863 law against cross-dressing empowered law enforcement to mark those who violated gender boundaries as "problem bodies." Officials used the laws to prosecute a wide range of gender transgressions by sex workers, female impersonators, feminist dress-reformers, and individuals whose gender identity deviated from their legal sex. This coincided with similar local efforts to regulate, remove, and conceal other "problem bodies," such as Chinese immigrants, prostitutes, and maimed or diseased persons.

In one of the book's most interesting chapters, Sears examines how vaudeville theaters, freak shows, dime museums, and slumming tours took advantage of the public's fascination with cross-dressing individuals and people with physical deformities. While cross-dressing laws regulated "problem bodies" and prohibited their visibility, these spectacles put such bodies on public display. Here audiences could safely satisfy their curiosity, glimpsing these peculiar bodies while maintaining a strict separation between themselves and the performers. By containing the public appearance of "problem bodies," such spectacles rendered inert any transgressive potential of the cross-gender practices, and instead reinforced gender norms.

Sears also argues that the 1863 cross-dressing law rendered some cross-dressing practices more visible by encouraging law enforcement and the public to *look for* and *look at* white cross-dressing individuals as public nuisances and freaks. Humiliating public displays and investigations of offenders' bodies in jails, police records, courtrooms, and newspaper reports reinforced this view of cross-dressing whites' otherness. Sears notes that newspaper reporters ironically *looked past* Chinese and Mexican cross-dressing individuals as they focused on policing gender boundaries among whites. This was partly due to limited enforcement of the law, the omission of race as a category in arrest statistics, and selective reporting by the white press. In this way, white journalists writing for a white audience and reporting on cases involving white cross-dressers marked normative gender as the "exclusive property of whites" (94). Whereas whites arrested for cross-dressing were represented as outsiders and isolated deviants, anti-Chinese exclusionists depicted Chinese immigrants in general as innately deceitful, immoral, and deviant. Chinese

gender practices were represented as "foreign and pathological," clearly falling outside the bounds of acceptable behavior. This logic helped to fuel the passage of the 1882 Chinese Exclusion Act, which limited Chinese immigration to the United States in part on the grounds that Chinese immigrants represented a moral threat. In turn, subsequent exclusion laws permitted immigration officials to exclude or deport any immigrant perceived as a threat to the moral order. For example, when Geraldine Portica, a male immigrant from Mexico, was arrested in 1917 for living and dressing as a woman, immigration authorities were legally justified in deporting her for violating San Francisco's cross-dressing law. Cross-dressing laws, combined with immigration restrictions, thus established gender normativity as a requirement for citizenship.

Sears brings nuanced analysis to bear on an impressive range of sources, including newspaper reports, police records, government reports and freak-show ephemera. She highlights contradictory figures, such as Police Chief Jesse Brown Cook, who was fascinated by theatrical drag shows while also rigorously enforcing cross-dressing laws. Through trans-ing analysis and the concept of "problem bodies," Sears advises scholars to consider the diversity of cross-dressing practices and their varied meanings in historical context. *Arresting Dress* is most interesting when Sears details the stories of the individuals who were impacted by the cross-dressing laws. Through accounts of people like John Roberts and Geraldine Portica, Sears gives voice to those who defied gender norms in gold rush California. In the process, Sears frees them from their confinement to the private sphere, liberating them from their marginal status in historical scholarship.

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**Victor Uribe-Uran, *Fatal Love: Spousal Killers, Law, and Punishment in the Late Colonial Spanish Atlantic* (Stanford University Press, 2015).**

In his new book, *Fatal Love*, Victor Uribe-Uran combines quantitative social history, legal history, and historical sociology to examine cases of spousal murder in the late colonial Spanish Atlantic. He demonstrates that “spousal murders [were] not random and deviant outbursts of aggression but rather systematic gender disputes over autonomy and obedience, deference, sex, [and] money” (5). These cases provide insight into the ways that husbands and wives negotiated the “reciprocal expectations of the privileges and duties of married life,” as well as how Spanish civil and ecclesiastical law upheld patriarchal gender and sexual norms (272).

Uribe-Uran examines over two hundred cases of spousal murder, from three parts of the Spanish Atlantic: Spain, New Spain (modern-day Mexico), and New Granada (modern-day Colombia). He devotes a separate chapter to the quantitative analysis of such cases in each location, allowing for a comparison of multiple aspects of the cases across the Spanish Empire. Uribe-Uran argues that infidelity and disagreements over patriarchal control of the household were common reasons for spousal killings. His findings challenge received wisdom about gender in the Spanish Empire, which generally depicts women as cloistered within the private sphere. Instead, Uribe-Uran makes clear that at least some women enjoyed active social lives, carried on adulterous relationships, and participated in economic activity, all of which placed them in contact with others. Uribe-Uran concludes that women murderers overwhelmingly killed family members not because they were insulated in the home, but because martial

tensions escalated when “women transcended the circumscribed space of the household” (207).

Uribe-Uran also challenges the notion that early modern Spain functioned as an honor-based society where women’s reputations rested on chastity and men defended their honor by killing adulterous wives. Spousal murder cases suggest instead that women rejected the norms of female purity and monogamy. Men also frequently turned to the law, rather than murder, to punish adulterous wives, while women plotted with lovers to kill their cuckolded husbands. In this way, such cases suggest that honor culture may have been less pervasive in late colonial Spain than has been assumed. Nevertheless, Uribe-Uran concludes that such murders highlight the patriarchal nature of marital relations in the Spanish Empire, where men enjoyed greater freedom than women to carry on sexual affairs, thus limiting the need for husbands to rid themselves of wives, whereas adulterous women saw few options beyond killing their husbands for ending an unhappy marriage.

In Uribe-Uran’s analysis, spousal murders also illuminate the intersection of racial ideology and the law in the Spanish Empire. While killers of mixed ancestry often faced the harshest sentences, Uribe-Uran makes clear that Amerindians in New Spain frequently received lesser punishments, even though they existed near the bottom of the Empire’s racial hierarchy. The legal system considered them *miserabiles personae*, “vulnerable and inferior people . . . in need of constant help,” such as judicial mercy, in order “to become civilized” (84). While Amerindian men who killed their wives might be understood as similar to “civilized” Spanish “patriarchs in control of their households,” Spaniards instead interpreted such crimes as evidence that natives were

“brutes, barbarians, and perpetual drunkards” (84).

Uribe-Uran also examines spousal murder within the broader history of Spanish civil and ecclesiastical law. Previous scholars have depicted the Spanish Empire’s judicial bureaucracy, procedures, and legal codes as ineffective and incomprehensible. In contrast, Uribe-Uran finds that, by the late eighteenth century, colonial subjects on both sides of the Atlantic understood themselves as part of the same habitual legal world. Indeed, Spanish subjects worked within the legal system because they saw it as upholding social order, including the ideal of monogamous lifelong marriage, and felt it was fair. Uribe-Uran asserts this perception of fairness came from the legal system’s constant pull between terror and clemency. The law prescribed death for anyone convicted of killing a family member, but judges consistently reduced sentences because defendants claimed insanity or drunkenness, and the King sometimes issued pardons around the time of religious or state holidays. The Catholic Church also offered asylum to convicted or suspected criminals. Some leaders fretted that subjects would commit crimes without worry because they expected to be pardoned. However, Uribe-Uran argues that while a convicted murderer might go free, the community felt that the defendant had received a fair trial, and their public shame at being the subject of prosecution would deter others from committing the same crime.

Historians of sexuality may find Uribe-Uran’s final chapters particularly intriguing, as here he challenges Michel Foucault’s argument that in the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries punishment shifted

from “public and physically painful chastisement of bodies . . . to the private repression of minds” (210). Instead, Uribe-Uran finds evidence that “body-centered, painful, and visible punishment, full of ritual” in the Spanish Empire continued into the nineteenth century (238). Convicted non-whites in the New World found that their options for clemency—royal pardons, Church asylum, and the status of *miserabiles personae*—vanished after independence, suggesting that punishment became more severe with the end of colonial rule. Convicted women also continued to suffer under a patriarchal system that denied them sympathy from judges and left them vulnerable to sexual violence at the hands of jailers and male prisoners. At the same time, a shift to more “civilized” punishments did take place, as evidenced by the change from the noose to the *garrote*, a device that killed by strangulation.

Uribe-Uran’s impressive breadth of knowledge shines through every chapter of *Fatal Love*, even if the wealth of information contained therein renders the book overwhelming at times. Spousal murder cases also make clear that the past is full of brutal and unhappy realities, and the squeamish may find some descriptions in the book off-putting. However, these cautions should not deter readers from Uribe-Uran’s commendable examination of how men and women negotiated marriage and gender roles through the law in the late colonial Spanish Atlantic.

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