



Committee on Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual & Transgender History

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Committee on LGBT History

Co-chairs: Emily Hobson and Julio Capó, Jr.

Book Review Editor: April Haynes

Newsletter Editor: Dan Royles

Co-Chairs' Column

As we reflect on all the organization has accomplished this past year, our first as co-chairs of the CLGBTH, we remain grateful to all of our members and colleagues for their support and confidence in us, and report that we have much to look forward to in the years to come.

The year 2019 marks the 50th anniversary of the Stonewall revolution, and we look forward to conversations with you on how to best remember, commemorate, and draw inspiration from the radical queer politics of that and other moments in our past. This year we also celebrate the 40th anniversary of the CLGBTH, which has been doing such important work in support of LGBTQ history and its interlocutors since 1979. We toast to all that has come before us and find strength and optimism in all that is still possible.

We are happy to report that, thanks especially to the hard work of Emily Skidmore, we stand on good financial ground. At the end of 2017, our former Secretary/Treasurer Rebecca Davis discovered that our 501c3 tax status had lapsed some years prior. Emily Skidmore, as incoming Secretary/Treasurer, took on the task of determining the potential consequences and how to renew our status. Thanks to Rebecca's initial investigation and Emily Skidmore's persistent efforts, we were able to renew without fees or back taxes, as well as to determine that members were not at risk if they had reported donations to the CLGBTH on past years of their own taxes. With this settled, we are eager to pursue new fundraising opportunities in 2019. We and the Governing Board are particularly interested in developing fundraising

that might support graduate students, contingent faculty, and others with particular needs.

Over the next several months, the CLGBTH will host and support important scholarly exchanges in our field at major conferences. In January, the CLGBTH will hold an impressive fifteen panels at the American Historical Association conference in Chicago, including several co-sponsored with other affiliate societies. Additionally, while at AHA we will convene our annual members' meeting, host a tour of the Gerber/Hart Library and Archives, and hold our annual reception. We hope to see many of you at these events!

At the AHA reception, we will thank those leaving our Governing Board and welcome three new Board members. We are indebted to Kirsten Leng, Amy Sueyoshi, and Stephen Vider, who faithfully served the Board for the past three years, contributing hard work and expertise. In November we held a competitive election for the three vacated Board seats. Members of the CLGBTH have elected Howard Chiang, Scott Larson, and Sarah Watkins to serve as Board members from January 2019 through December 2021. We share the membership's enthusiasm for these new Board members' leadership and their strengths in trans, queer, early American, African, and Asian histories.

We are also pleased, at the AHA reception in January, to announce the winners of the John Boswell Prize (outstanding book in LGBTQ history), Joan Nestle Prize (outstanding paper on LGBTQ history by undergraduate student), and our inaugural Don Romesburg Prize (outstanding K-12 curriculum in LGBTQ history). We offer our heartfelt gratitude to the members of this year's prize committees for their service. The Boswell and Nestle prize committees were led by Rachel Hope Cleves (Chair), J.T. Roane,

and Caroline Radesky, and the Romesburg prize committee by Wendy Rouse (Chair), Don Romesburg, and David Duffield. Their hard work allows us to continue recognizing much new and exciting research and public service in our field. In the new year, please keep an eye out for our next call for prize submissions, and for panel and paper proposals for the 2020 AHA annual meeting in New York City.

In addition to our ambitious program at this year's AHA in Chicago, we are thrilled that the CLGBTH will finally hold its own conference: Queer History Conference 2019. We owe a debt of gratitude to the conference organizers, Nick Syrett and Amy Sueyoshi, for all of their hard work and dedication to creating a space that will offer us all the unique position to share and engage with works in LGBTQ history across research period, region, and focus. They, along with an incredible program committee—Howard Chiang, René Esparza, Will Kuby, Amanda Littauer, Kirsten Leng, Víctor Macías-González, Jen Manion, Wendy Rouse, Nikita Shepard, Yorick Smaal, T.J. Tallie, and Sarah Watkins—are currently reviewing dozens of submissions. As a reminder, the conference will be held at San Francisco State University from June 16 to 18, 2019. More information will soon be made available.

With so much to look forward to, we remain cognizant of the hard work that awaits us all. We are, more than ever, firmly committed to fulfilling the mission of our organization in the face of constant political uncertainty and violence, including recent reports on the Trump Administration's ambitions to erase and undermine the lives and experiences of trans people by seeking to adopt a definition of gender premised "on a biological basis that is clear,

grounded in science, objective, and administrable”—a perspective that, in addition to its amoral hostility, has been debunked by research in the humanities and sciences alike. We stand united against this hatred and violence and maintain our solidarity with all others under attack. Indeed, we acknowledge that our vulnerability to such attacks is directly related to our relationship to power and to preconceptions—real or imagined—of our gender, sexuality, race, class, ethnicity, age, religion, and ability. We redouble our commitment to queer, including trans, scholarship and politics, and respectfully ask for your hand in helping us continue the work of the CLGBTH.

Julio Capó, Jr.
University of Massachusetts Amherst

Emily K. Hobson
University of Nevada, Reno

AHA 2019

The American Historical Association (AHA) will hold its annual meeting January 3-6 in Chicago. As usual, CLGBTH is offering a full slate of paper panels, roundtables, and tours that explore the queer past. See you in the Windy City!

Thursday, January 3, 1:30-3:00pm

Queer Encounters with the US Legal System in the 20th Century

Hilton Chicago, Williford A

Chair and Comment: David K. Johnson,
University of South Florida

Papers:

The Fall of Walter Jenkins: Sexuality, Policing, and Politics in the 1960s

Timothy Stewart-Winter, Rutgers University at Newark


Get ready for

Queer History Conference 2019

June 16-18, 2019 • San Francisco State University

Co-hosted by the Committee on LGBT History and the GLBT Historical Society

Sponsors include the James C. Hormel LGBTQIA Center of the San Francisco Public Library

 Committee on
Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual & Transgender History

 GLBT
Historical
Society
museum & archives



James C. Hormel
LGBTQIA Center
San Francisco Public Library

Dorm room housing will be available to make the conference as affordable as possible.

For more information: <http://clgbthistory.org/queer-history-conference-2019>

Confessions of a Guilty Bystander: Clay Shaw and Civil Rights Claims in a Homophobic Age

Alecia P. Long, Louisiana State University

Baker v. Wade and the Long Struggle to Overturn the Texas Homosexual Conduct Law

Wesley Phelps, Sam Houston State University

Thursday, January 3, 3:30-5:00pm

Roundtable: Building Queer-Inclusive Curriculum and Student Life beyond the R1

Hilton Chicago, Williford C

Chair: William Kuby, University of Tennessee at Chattanooga

Panel:

Chelsea Del Rio, LaGuardia Community College, City University of New York

Karen M. Dunak, Muskingum University

Elliot James, University of Minnesota Morris

David A. Reichard, California State University, Monterey Bay

Friday, January 4, 8:30-10:00am

Lavender Scares: Reflections on US and Global Narratives of the State's Queer Exclusion

Hilton Chicago, Boulevard C • joint session with the Society for Historians of American Foreign Relations

Chair: Julio Capó Jr., University of Massachusetts Amherst

Panel:

Laura A. Belmonte, Oklahoma State University

Benjamin A. Cowan, University of California, San Diego

Lauren Gutterman, University of Texas at Austin

David K. Johnson, University of South Florida

Friday, January 4, 10:30am-12:00pm

Sexology, Legal Activism, and the Question of Queer Patriotism in Germany, 1870-1970

Hilton Chicago, Williford C • joint session with the Central European History Society and the German Historical Institute

Chair: Lauren Kaminsky, Harvard University

Papers:

Karl Heinrich Ulrichs and Magnus Hirschfeld: Queer Patriots?

Tom Butcher, University of Virginia

Was There a Lavender Scare behind the Iron Curtain? Sexology, Politics, and Homosexual Personhood in 1950s and 1960s East Germany

Erik Huneke, University of Central Oklahoma

Patriotic Bisexuality and the Disloyal Homosexual Subject in Weimar Germany

Lauren Stokes, Northwestern University

Comment: Robert Beachy, Yonsei University

Friday, January 4, 12:30-1:30pm

CLGBTH Members' Meeting

Hilton Chicago, McCormick Boardroom

Friday, January 4, 1:30-3:00pm

HIV/AIDS and the Historian, 2019

Hilton Chicago, Williford C

Chair: Jennifer Brier, University of Illinois at Chicago

Papers:

Embracing Disability: AIDS Activism and the Americans with Disabilities Act

Nancy Brown, Purdue University

Consolidating Resources and Packaging Power: Intersectional Collaborations in the Heartland AIDS Response

Katie Batza, University of Kansas

Finding AIDS: Black Lesbian Feminist Intellectuals and the Struggle against AIDS

Darius Bost, University of Utah

Love at the Intersections: Sisterlove, Inc. and Black Women's HIV/AIDS Care

Dan Royles, Florida International University

Comment: Audience

Friday, January 4, 3:30-5:00pm

Queer Transnational Loyalties: Movement Building beyond the Nation-State

Hilton Chicago, Williford B

Chair: Chet R. DeFonso, Northern Michigan University

Papers:

Failed Projects and Lonely Hearts: Der Kreis and the Italian Homophiles

Alessio Ponzio, University of Michigan

Rethinking Feminism in '68: Féminin, Masculin, Avenir, and the Intersectional Origins of the MLF

Hannah Leffingwell, New York University

Gay Liberation and Chilean Fascism: Transnational Communication and Solidarity

Scott de Groot, University of Winnipeg

Comment: David S. Churchill, University of Manitoba

Playing the Field: Promiscuous Loyalties and *The Routledge History of Queer America*

Hilton Chicago, Stevens C-4

Chair: Don Romesburg, Sonoma State University

Panel:

Richard Godbeer, Virginia Commonwealth University

Amanda Littauer, Northern Illinois University

Lara L. Kelland, University of Louisville

Katie Batza, University of Kansas

Stephen Vider, Bryn Mawr College

Comment: Audience

Friday, January 4, 7:00-8:00pm

LGBTQ Historians' Reception

Hilton Chicago, Boulevard A

Saturday, January 5, 8:30-10:00am

In the Universities and on the Streets: LGBTQ History, Queer Studies, Social Movement Histories

Hilton Chicago, Boulevard C • joint session with the AHA

Chair: John A. D'Emilio, University of Illinois at Chicago

Panel:

Matt Brim, College of Staten Island, City University of New York

Rachel Corbman, State University of New York at Stony Brook

John A. D'Emilio

Rostom Mesli, University of Michigan

SaraEllen Strongman, University of Pennsylvania

Saturday, January 5, 10:30am-12:00pm

LGBTQ Oral History Past and Present

Hilton Chicago, Boulevard C • joint session with the AHA and the Oral History Association

Chair: Stephen Vider, Bryn Mawr College

Panel:

Nan Alamilla Boyd, San Francisco State University

Abram J. Lewis, Grinnell College

Jeanne Vaccaro, University of California, Davis

Gregory Rosenthal, Roanoke College

Jessica Wilkerson, University of Mississippi

Comment: Elspeth H. Brown, University of Toronto

“Lesbian-Like” Loyalties and Archival Silences, c. 1900–30s

Hilton Chicago, Stevens C-6 • joint session with the Coordinating Council for Women in History

Chair: Julie Enszer, independent scholar

Papers:

Strategic Silences: Sophonisba Breckinridge, Edith Abbott, and Same-Sex Relationships in Early 20th-Century America

Anya Jabour, University of Montana

“All Day My Heart Has Gone Hungry”: An Educator’s Poetic Exclamations and Silences in the American West, c. 1910–25

Pamela J. Stewart, Arizona State University

“A Perfect Love in a Better World”:
Reconstructing the Love Story of Two Young Women in Early 20th-Century Boston

Wendy Rouse, San José State University

Comment: Audience

Saturday, January 5, 12:30–3:30pm

Tour of the Gerber/Hart Library and Archives

Meet at Hilton Chicago, 8th Street Registration Desk

This tour of the Gerber/Hart Library and Archives, a major research center for LGBTQ history founded in 1981, explores the unique challenges and possibilities for preserving and presenting the LGBTQ past, with an overview of the Gerber/Hart collection and current exhibits. Tickets (\$20 or \$10 for students) should be purchased through the AHA’s registration process.

Saturday, January 5, 1:30-3:00pm

Writing Early Queer Lives: Authorial and Biographical Imperatives before 1900

Hilton Chicago, Williford C • joint session with the AHA

Chair: Richard Godbeer, Virginia Commonwealth University

Panel:

Thomas J. Balcerski, Eastern Connecticut State University

Brian Martin, Williams College

Charles J. Upchurch, Florida State University

Amy Washburn, Kingsborough Community College, City University of New York

Global Christine: Sex Change in Mexico, Taiwan, and the United States in the 1950s

Hilton Chicago, Boulevard C • joint session with the AHA

Chair: Leisa D. Meyer, College of William and Mary

Papers:

Now I Have Found Myself, and I Am Happy:
Marta Olmos, Identity, and Sex Reassignment in
Mexico, 1952–57

Ryan Jones, State University of New York, College
at Geneseo

The Chinese Christine: Xie Jianshun, Sex Change,
and the Politics of Chineseness in Cold War
Taiwan

Howard Chiang, University of California, Davis

The Hypervisible Whiteness of Christine
Jorgensen's Transnational Celebrity

Susan Stryker, University of Arizona

Comment: Audience

Saturday, January 5, 3:30-5:00pm

Apropos Scholarship: When LGBTQ Historical
Research Shaped Current Events and Activism

Hilton Chicago, Stevens C-1

Chair: Emily K. Hobson, University of Nevada at
Reno

Panel:

Vitaly Chernetsky, University of Kansas

Ian K. Lekus, Amnesty International USA

Siobahn Somerville, University of Illinois at
Urbana-Champaign

Sunday, January 6, 9:00-10:30am

Perspectives on LGBTQ History: Race, Gender,
and Urbanity

Palmer House Hilton, Adams Room • joint
session with the AHA

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

Papers:

Music, Race, and Drag: The Hidden History of
Drag Queens in Jazz Clubs of 1930s Indianapolis
Stephen Lane II, Purdue University

Where Else Can We Go? The Black Gay Bar in the
Urban Mid-Atlantic

Eric Nolan Gonzaba, George Mason University

Race, Equality, and Visibility: Examining
Baltimore's Forgotten Queer Past

Jonathan Bailey, Rutgers, The State University of
New Jersey

Sunday, January 6, 11:00am-12:30pm

Spies, Homophiles, and Race in the Americas,
1940–70

Palmer House Hilton, Crystal Room • joint
session with the AHA and the Conference on
Latin American History

Chair and Comment: Nicholas Syrett, University
of Kansas

Papers:

Martin and Mitchell, Turncoat Technicians: The
Lavender Scare and Cold War Homophilia

Christina Gusella, Emory University

The Suave Latin Queer: Gonzálo "Tony" Segura
(1919–91), Homophile Activism, and Latin
America, 1955–61

Víctor M. Macías-González, University of
Wisconsin–La Crosse

"The Second Largest Minority": Analogies
between Race and Sexuality in the American
Homophile Movement, 1944–68

Nikita Shepard, Columbia University

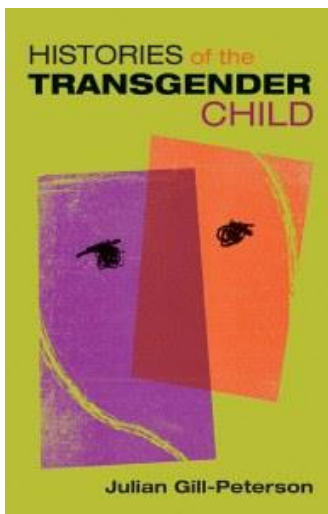
Book Announcements

In this portion of the newsletter, we print book announcements in the field as sent to us by presses. To submit a book announcement to the CLGBTH newsletter, please have the press email the newsletter editor, Dan Royles (droyles@gmail.com). Announcements may be adjusted for reasons of space.

University of Minnesota Press announces a new book:

Histories of the Transgender Child, by Julian Gill-Peterson

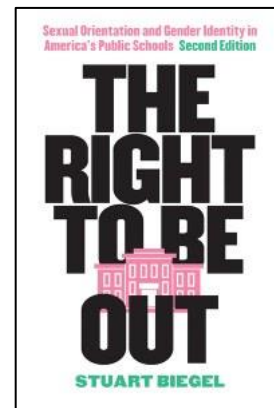
Histories of the Transgender Child uncovers a previously unknown twentieth-century history when transgender children not only existed but preexisted the term transgender and its predecessors, playing a central role in the medicalization of trans people, and all sex and gender. Using a wealth of archival research from hospitals and clinics, Julian Gill-Peterson reconstructs the medicalization and racialization of children's bodies.



As well as an updated edition:

The Right to Be Out: Orientation and Gender Identity in America's Public Schools, Second Edition, by Stuart Biegel

With ongoing battles over transgender rights, bullying cases in the news almost daily, and marriage equality only recently the law of the land, this book could not be more timely. In an updated edition that explores the altered legal terrain of LGBT rights for students and educators, Stuart Biegel offers expert guidance on the most challenging concerns in this fraught context.



Book Reviews

Tom Waidzunas, *The Straight Line: How the Fringe Science of Ex-Gay Therapy Reoriented Sexuality* (Minneapolis: Minnesota University Press, 2015).

The history of homosexuality in America in connection to scientific inquiry and therapeutic culture has been told on occasion since the onset of its critical review in the late 1970s. Tom Waidzunas' *The Straight Line* however, is one of the few monographs dedicated entirely to the history of sexual orientation change efforts. In his pursuit to trace "reorientation therapies" (2)

over more than 70 years, the book delves deep into the debates surrounding these practices. It contextualizes different theories on the nature of same-sex desire, changing ethical and scientific standards and arguments in favor of and against sexual reorientation to different historical actors, institutions and waves of social movements. To compensate for lacking written sources, the author uses oral history interviews to amplify previously unheard voices and unearth information that would have otherwise remained imperceptible. It is this empirical approach that especially enriches readers' understanding of the controversies surrounding the issue. Consequently, *The Straight Line* is a great contribution to the field of LGBT history.

Tom Waidzunas, currently an associate professor at Temple University, subscribes to a social constructionist perspective and his approach is inspired by queer theory. He invites readers to review with him the historical production of medical knowledge about sexual orientation and the political responses of opposing social movements. Taking this position allows him to analyze the role social movements have played in the construction of knowledge, and to trace how notions about the homosexual/heterosexual binary have changed gradually and repeatedly over time. It further enables him to question the morals and ethics of reorientation therapy while also problematizing the essentialism advocated by many contemporary LGBT rights groups. What really makes *The Straight Line* stand apart from earlier studies of the history of reorientation therapy is its contextualization of developments in the recent past that transcended US-borders. Following one central claims of the book, namely that "treatable psychogenic homosexuality was in many ways a US invention" (64), the first four

of the book's five chapters concentrate on the United States, while the fifth directs the reader's attention towards a more global perspective.

Throughout the course of the first chapter, Waidzunas describes how the categorization of homosexuality as a mental illness came into being and how this paradigm was challenged from the 1960s onwards. An additional emphasis of this chapter lays on (neo)psychoanalysis, and its amalgamation of with social hygienic and behaviorist ideas in the US, which served as a theoretical framework to justify reorientation therapy since the 1930s. The chapter concludes by examining the homophile movement's role in the emergence of a new scientific positioning of homosexuality and the deletion of homosexuality from the second edition of the Diagnostic Statistic Manual (DSM) in the early 1970s.

The second chapter traces important shifts in the attitude towards homosexuality within the medical professions between 1973 and the early 2000s. It describes how an understanding of homosexuality as a "normal variant" entered the mainstream for the first time in the early 1970s and gay-affirmative therapies became the leading trend within the field of therapeutics in the United States (69). This demedicalization however, as the author informs, was a gradual process, and older notions depicting same-sex desire as "suboptimal" (68) continued to linger long into the 1980s. The slow change was countered by an opposition, that originated during the mid-1970s in wings of the Fourth Great Awakening. This later dubbed "ex gay" (77) movement was not an exclusively evangelical or religious community, it also provided a space for medical practitioners that felt uncomfortable with the deletion of homosexuality from the diagnostic manuals and

wanted to continue offering reorientation therapy for patients who reported distress over their same-sex desire. Consequently, an emphasis on personal testimonies and religious rhetoric entered a debate that had formerly been characterized for the most part by secular, detached, scientific language. Fueled by the AIDS health crisis and the anti-gay political atmosphere of the 1980s, the ex-gay movement steadily grew in numbers and visibility. Its prominence in media coverage eventually led the general public to perceive a genuine scientific controversy, despite the consistent rejection of all major medical professional associations during this period. This chapter methodically deconstructs the arguments that circulated in this process and provides context for understanding key actors and their texts. It analyzes occasions when backdoors in argumentation and regulation were left open and convincingly explains why key actors advocated that reorientation therapy should continue.

In response to Spitzer's changed position and an increasing visibility of reorientation therapy supporters in the media, an oppositional "ex-gay survivor movement" (116) emerged in the early 2000s. This new movement, also known under the label "ex-ex-gay" (ibid.), was comprised by former members of the ex-gay groups. Chapter 3 is dedicated to the public confrontation of these two movements and its effect on the debate surrounding reorientation therapy. Between 2004 and 2007, narratives of harm linked to reorientation therapy emerged into the public debate as anti-reorientation activism gained momentum. Waidzunus argues that the new political situation split the "ex gay movement" and created opportunities for dialogue between moderate gay rights activists, gay-affirmative and reorientation therapy advocates. This

"middle path," as the author has dubbed it, made new terminology necessary and gave new importance to personal testimonies as a form of evidence (115).

The fourth chapter deals with the APA task force for investigating an appropriate therapeutic response to sexual orientation. Waidzunus analyzes the politics of who was cast as a member for the 2007 committee and who was deliberately excluded. He contextualizes the task force's eventual recommendation as the consequence of the involvement of professionals with experience in treating former members of ex-gay groups. This recommendation was a significant step toward establishing a common ground for dialogue between LGBT activists, former members of the ex-gay movement, and more moderate advocates of reorientation therapy. According to Waidzunus, such communication significantly contributed to the decline in the popularity of the ex-gay movement, which has persisted since the late 2000s.

The fifth and last chapter traces transnational flows of knowledge and resources. Waidzunus analyzes the surge in international ex-gay organizations outside the United States, particularly in the Global South. He focuses on the case of Uganda, which has an extraordinarily strict anti-homosexuality law. Uganda featured prominently in US news coverage between 2009 and 2014. Waidzunus identifies several key factors for the existence of reorientation therapy in Uganda: First, anticolonial sentiments that regard homosexuality as an imported, European practice; second, limited access to up-to-date medical knowledge and training; third, experiences related to the AIDS-crisis; and finally, a misunderstanding of LGBT rights

groups' lobbying for AIDS-relief. The growth of the ex-gay movement across the Global South appears to be a side-effect of its declining support in the US. Waidzunas contrasts the role of local mental health professionals in maintaining a pathological view of homosexuality with the growing international consensus that sees homosexuality as normal. At the same time, this chapter illustrates similarities between the anti-homosexual climate in US history and that of contemporary Uganda.

What makes *The Straight Line* stand out are the thirty-eight interviews Waidzunas conducted with key figures he identified by thoroughly reviewing the literature on reorientation therapy. The great effort expended in this method is to be commended. The interviews provide a unique opportunity to understand the dynamics between science, the gay rights movement and the ex-gay movement. The book's only weakness might be that the chapters covering the period before the 1970s are based on existing literature, rather than on archival research. Nevertheless, the result is an intriguing read for LGBT historians interested in medical practices, political opposition to gay liberation, and anticolonial sexual politics.

The book presents a complex explanation for the continuing existence of reorientation practices. The author's attention to dependencies and feedback loops makes possible a nuanced critique of both reorientation therapy, on the one hand, and essentialist gay-rights arguments, on the other. Starting where most previous studies of the medical discourse on homosexuality conclude, this book can be usefully read as a sequel to many histories of the early gay rights movement's fight for de-medicalization. Overall,

Tom Waidzunas has produced a sound and sophisticated study that undoubtedly will come to be regarded as a seminal work for LGBT historians, queer theorists, and sociologists of medicine alike.

Merle Ingenfeld
University of Cologne, Germany

Joseph Cassara, *The House of Impossible Beauties* (New York: Harper Collins, 2018)

Rebecca Makkai, *The Great Believers* (New York: Viking, 2018)

Tim Murphy, *Christodora* (New York: Grove Press, 2016)

Since its impact first began to be felt in the 1980s, AIDS has been represented culturally through film, music, visual art, and literature. Cultural producers have sought to capture the ravages of the disease itself, but also the activism surrounding it; the rage, sorrow, and resilience of those affected by it; and the callous disregard for those who have lived with and died from AIDS related illnesses on the part of many government officials, opportunistic capitalists, and unsympathetic religious leaders. Today, the historiography of AIDS has become a robust subfield within LGBT history. Many colleges and university offer courses on HIV/AIDS history, and classes teaching the history of sexuality ask students to think carefully about both the ways AIDS affected American culture, as well as how broader questions about sexuality have been shaped by the ongoing epidemic. Seemingly every theme in American history – race, space, class, gender, sexuality – has inflected how we understand the epidemic, and historians have produced an exhaustive literature unpacking how politicians and profiteers have

instrumentalized people with AIDS to advance their own ideologies.

In recent years, major American publishers seem to have re-discovered AIDS as a legitimate subject for serious contemporary fiction. After three decades of writers producing a veritable canon of such literary work, many of which have been published by smaller independent or university presses, many of which specialize in feminist and queer literature and are less concerned with churning out *New York Times* bestsellers, a number of especially high-profile novels have appeared that place AIDS at the center of their narratives, exploring within their pages urban life, gentrification, artistic communities, loss, and resistance. In this review, I offer some preliminary thoughts for educators considering using recent literary texts in history classrooms, focusing on three novels that have been hailed by mainstream readers and critics. Each offers a unique perspective on AIDS and sexuality that might be of interest to historians, and each allows students to think not only about the history of AIDS, but also of the politics of representation.

Tim Murphy's *Christadora*, published in 2016, focuses on one building in the East Village, tracing the interconnected lives of several of its residents in a narrative spanning the late 1980s to the 2020s. The timeline of the novel covers an important moment in the gentrification of the East Village, a subject that has been discussed in relation to AIDS with great sensitivity by, to give but one example, Sarah Schulman in *Gentrification of the Mind* (as well as in her novels). While Murphy is interested in the past, his novel also reaches into the future, gesturing towards a moment just outside the grasp of the present. As a longtime journalist covering the

AIDS beat, Murphy demonstrates a deep understanding of both the epidemic and its social causes and consequences. The Tompkins Square Park riot of 1988 represents a centerpiece in the novel, connecting queers, people of color, and class conflict within a meticulously crafted urban geography. Activism, Murphy suggests, did not begin with the AIDS epidemic, and those who were radicalized by it were often drawn into related movements, sometimes at great cost. Murphy rejects narratives that falsely separate gay people with AIDS from those often marginalized in popular narratives, opting for an intersectional narrative that imbricates queers with intravenous drug users, Puerto Ricans and African Americans, artsy Bohemians, and heterosexual gentrifiers. His novel, then works well to introduce students to characters whose relationship to AIDS changes alongside the history surrounding them. *Christadora's* reach into the future helps introduce discussions about the long reach of AIDS history, disrupting in the process mythology surrounding the disease that too often attempts to relegate it, especially in an American context, to the past.

Joseph Cassara's 2018 novel *The House of Impossible Beauties* attempts to offer a fictionalized account of New York's famous Harlem ball culture, focusing in particular upon the founding of the House of Xtravaganza and the eventual death of Venus Xtravaganza. Many students will likely recognize those names from *Paris Is Burning*, the 1990 documentary that both introduced many audiences to ball culture and frustrated those who pointed out its exploitative dimensions, as well as its exclusions. AIDS was one of the film's notable exclusions, lingering somewhere in the background without its impact being fully explored. Cassara places AIDS more centrally in his story, casting a wide net that

emphasizes the particularities of queer Latinx experiences of community, solidarity, and loss. The gorgeously rendered and often irreverent narrative moves in and out of Spanglish, Cassara's language enrobing its characters in the solidarity of shared culture. In this regard, *The House of Impossible Beauties* offers a compelling counterpoint to Jennie Livingston's film, which often distances the filmmaker from her subject. Yet historians are likely to prickle at some of the more glaring historical inaccuracies in the novel, many of which have been discussed in a careful review by LGBTQ historian Hugh Ryan for *OUT Magazine*: the appearance of an HIV test before one existed; the sanguine depiction of hospitals tending to gay people with AIDS in 1984; the perfunctory treatment of drag balls. Ryan is correct to point out the historical issues in the novel. While it is exciting to see queer Latinx culture centralized in an AIDS narrative, it is unfortunate that this comes at the expense of some historical rigor. Still, historians who are open to guiding students through a careful critical reading might find productive discussion emerging around the licenses that are permitted and prohibited in historical fiction, and the strength of Cassara's writing might provide a useful point of entry for discussion that complicates notions that fiction functions simply as a window into the past.

Finally, Rebecca Makkai's *The Great Believers*, set in Chicago, was published to great acclaim in 2018. As with Murphy's book, Makkai locates her action in both the early years of the epidemic and in a more contemporary setting. The novel focuses on a friendship between a gay man and a woman who care deeply for one another, emphasizing their shared investment both in their experiences of tremendous loss and search for creative outlets to channel their grief and

anger. Unlike Murphy and Cassara, Makkai is less interested in intersectional depictions of race and class. She is, however, deeply invested in depicting both artistic responses to AIDS within communities deeply affected by it and the particular struggles of those who survive after that community is gone. She also joins writers such as Amy Hoffman, author of *Hospital Time*, who have written movingly about the particular role women played during the early years of the epidemic. *The Great Believers* is less grounded in the particularities of place that drive Murphy and Cassara's work, but her sense of character – both in their interiority and their creative energy – captures an important dynamic in AIDS history. Her novel might be useful for historians seeking a text that helps students understand both the importance of caregiving as a cultural response to the AIDS epidemic (one might imagine placing it alongside Felix Gonzalez-Torres's *Untitled (For Jeff)*, a 1991 photograph of the artist's lover's caretaker's hand) and the role of art in allowing communities to make sense of AIDS's devastation.

Though historians will, of course, need to carefully historicize any of these works, they each offer opportunities for students to grapple with contemporary reflections on the meanings of HIV/AIDS in American culture. It bears noting that each of these novels places much of their action in the past, and framing them in a history classroom requires great sensitivity to allow students to recognize how much of their narrative power comes from their distance from the time period where much of the narratives are set. We will have to continue waiting for a major trade press to publish a novel meditating on the experiences that are still too often overlooked, such as those of African Americans confronting an increasingly racialized AIDS epidemic in the

contemporary United States. In the meantime, these three novels mark unusually mainstream additions to a continually growing literature on AIDS and its continuing relevance in American life.

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Katie Batza, *Before AIDS: Gay Health Politics in the 1970s* (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 2018)

The title of Katie Batza's first book is sly and sexy. It entices not only by the allure of its words but by signaling the coming wave of critical scholarship on HIV/AIDS. *Before AIDS* builds on the accounts of journalists and movement participants as it wisely moves beyond the hagiographic narration of the AIDS crisis as a morality tale of "good" activists against an "evil" government. This first generation of histories is best exemplified by the most authoritative history of the AIDS crisis: Randy Shilts' *And the Band Played On* (1987). But even David France's lyrical and ruminative *How to Survive a Plague* (2016), published some thirty years later, perpetuates this dualistic framing of innocent victims in the face of an indifferent, even murderous, "straight state." *Before AIDS*, in contrast, follows the lead of Jennifer Brier, whose *Infectious Ideas: U.S. Political Responses to the AIDS Crisis* (2009) inaugurated in AIDS scholarship an embrace of dispassionate analysis rather than the righteous anger.

Drawing on interviews and archival documents in three deeply-researched case studies in Chicago, Los Angeles, and Boston, Batza explains how and why clinics sprouted up across the country in the 1970s to address the sexual and health needs of gays and other marginalized

populations. When *Before AIDS* shines brightly—which it does frequently over its concise 135 pages—it sheds light on a broader AIDS chronology that moves us back at least a decade. At its best, the book reveals how AIDS recast the relationship among sexuality, subjectivity, health, science, and medicine in the last third of the 20th-century.

Batza makes two main interventions in AIDS scholarship and LGBT history that enrich our understanding of both gay liberation and the so-called "straight state." First, she "decenters" gay liberation in the emergence of gay health clinics. Yoking the centers to a "romanticized" version of gay liberation, Batza contends, "oversimplifies their origins and misrepresents gay liberation" (39). Batza presents the history of gay liberation as variegated and shifting, mutable and messy. It was not always central to gay health politics in the 1970s. In one colorful metaphor about the Fenway Community Health Clinic in Boston, Batza writes that liberation was little more than a "faint background hum to the neighborhood's chants against gentrification and for access to affordable quality health care" (21).

Batza chronicles how gay men turned from pariahs in the world of medicine in the early 1970s to active movers and shakers within it by the end of the decade. Until 1973, the American Psychiatric Association (APA) listed homosexuality as a mental illness; by 1975 health professionals cajoled the American Public Health Association to pass a gay rights resolution to draw attention to the specific health needs of the community. Across an array of medical groups, including the APA, similar gay caucuses were formed.

Problems hardly stopped there. Most doctors did not know how to treat gay men and lesbians.

Patients would ask for an oral or anal test for STIs at public clinics and the official “would literally drop their instruments and run out of the room,” Dr. David Ostrow from Chicago recalled (62). Many gay men did not have health insurance. And even those who did might pay out of pocket instead of using it, for they feared their employer might find out and fire them.

In response to this shocking lack of knowledge about and services for gay health, Ostrow and others formed Chicago’s Howard Brown Medical Clinic in 1974. Clinics normalized gay sex. They educated officials by making “fact sheets” about gay health; the sheets openly deployed the language of gay sex, referencing once-taboo topics like “rimming” and “blow jobs.” (119). Howard Brown also became a “national clearinghouse” for cutting-edge research on gay medicine; it partnered with the Centers for Disease Control and pharmaceutical companies to develop a hepatitis B vaccine, a disease then spreading rapidly in gay populations (100). Later AIDS drug experiments and trials benefited from these collaborations. In recovering this history, Batza complicates the one-note portrayal of an “evil” government during the AIDS crisis.

Because gay liberation was sex liberation, the provision by these new health clinics of free STI testing was groundbreaking. Clinics concocted novel solutions by allying with gay businesses. In Chicago, bars and bathhouses financed a Winnebago van that parked outside establishments and offered free STI testing. To raise awareness about sexual health, drag queen Wanda Lust donned the persona “Nurse Lust” and became the program’s “poster person” (55). Lust would “walk up to people coming out of the bar and say, ‘Come on sweetheart, get tested or I won’t let you screw me tonight’” (55).

Batza’s second key insight: this emerging culture of gay sexual health was not the product of a “straight state” but an “antiqueer” one. In contrast to the 1980s, she discovers, health clinics increasingly turned to the state for funding as the 1970s unfolded. By 1978, LA’s gay clinic had received three-quarters of a million dollars of block grants from the government. This turn had profound consequences. Early in their lifespan, health clinics skirted tax payments and ignored the need for licenses or malpractice insurance. State funds forced clinics to regulate, professionalize, and bureaucratize. The “antiqueer state,” then, in the eyes of Batza, was one that “encouraged assimilation” between clinic and state while “quashing” any structural critique of capitalism (67). Of course, this is a genuine surprise given the standard account of neglect during the 1980s AIDS epidemic found in the work of Randy Shilts or Larry Kramer. In the fighting words of ACT-UP, the Reagan administration’s abandonment was an act of “genocide.” In contrast, health clinics’ desperate need for resources marked a period of “enmeshment” between gays and the state (131).

Before AIDS explains how the union of the state and the clinic weakened the forces of radicalism and strengthened those of accommodation. Radicals grew disenchanted, complaining in one memorable line of the “male-identified bourgeois capitalist sexist lackey pigs” who had taken over their experiments in sexual democracy (83). Batza notes that clinics failed to adequately respond to the needs of lesbians and racial minorities. The location of Howard Brown, on Chicago’s far richer and whiter North Side, rendered it far less accessible to African-Americans and Latinos who predominately resided on the city’s West and South sides. In short, the politics of gay sexual health mirrored

gay politics writ large as the 1970s witnessed the “political conflation of gay identity as a white identity.” (93).

Before AIDS is all the more fascinating for how it allows us to better grasp the “magnitude, mysteriousness, and morbidity” of AIDS and society’s response to it (122). Gay health clinics pioneered ethical principles that indelibly shaped the AIDS crisis, including the beliefs that individual privacy was paramount and that individual responsibility mattered less important than state neglect. Many public health workers argued that testing required anonymity for sexual minorities who lacked basic protections. Epidemiologists countered that more robust public health interventions, such as contact tracing, could halt the spread of the virus.

Batza’s imaginative reframing of the age of AIDS suffers from two blind spots. First, it too breezily passes over how the commodification of gay sex in bathhouses and bars and sex shops and theatres over the 1970s exacerbated problems of gay health. Second, as most clearly shown in Gabriel Rotello’s superb *Sexual Ecology* (1998), gay liberation meant the nature of sex changed in the 1970s from one dominated by oral to an embrace of unprotected anal sex—a practice that far more readily fostered the spread of STIs than oral sex. After all, as Batza points out, rising concern culminated in the first national conference on gay-related STIs in Chicago in 1979.

Make no mistake: *Before AIDS* is a marvelous history. Batza is a lucid and spirited writer. The chapters are economically organized; she marshals the most compelling evidence; and she never overreaches in the analytical import of her

study. This is first-rate history and it should be widely read.

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Johanna Schoen, *Abortion after Roe* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 2015)

In this thoroughly researched and deeply important study, Johanna Schoen charts a complex and nuanced history of abortion access in the United States in the decades since the 1973 Supreme Court decision in *Roe v. Wade* legalized abortion. Ultimately, she finds a mixed legacy: while legalization made abortion accessible to most women, the rise of antiabortion activism and legislators resulted in abortion becoming “highly politicized and stigmatized” and more restricted over time (19). Schoen is an expert in medical history as well as the history of women and sexuality whose research for her book *Choice and Coercion: Birth Control, Sterilization, and Abortion in Public Health and Welfare* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina, 2005) ultimately led the governor of North Carolina to apologize for the state’s forced sterilization of more than 7,000 people between the 1920s and 1970s. She makes many contributions to the history of women’s reproductive healthcare in this new book, but of particular significance is her original analysis in tracing physicians’ development of pregnancy termination procedures that resulted in better health outcomes for women. Schoen shows how the antiabortion movement reversed this progress by succeeded in influencing which surgical procedures could be legally performed in the U.S.; achieving in the 2007 *Gonzales v. Carhart* Supreme Court decision a ban on intact dilation and evacuation (D & E), termed “partial

birth abortion” by antiabortion activists, despite the procedure’s greater effectiveness than prior pregnancy termination methods in preserving women’s health and fertility. This finding provides an important example of how the Religious Right has influenced the provision of medical care in the U.S., an issue significant to LGBTQ historians in the context of so-called conversion therapy as well as trans health care. Schoen centers her account on the experiences of abortion providers as well as patients, and mines the records of independent abortion providers, who started their own clinics and formed a professional organization, the National Abortion Federation (NAF), which she joined and which provided her access to conduct oral history interviews with many physicians, clinic owners, and other professionals involved in delivering abortion care. While today “the vast majority” of abortions are performed in Planned Parenthood clinics, this was not the case in the 1970s and 1980s. Schoen argues that independent providers were leaders in the field: they “carved out the framework for abortion services” and in response to antiabortion activism in the 1990s “led the abortion provider community through innovative changes in abortion care” (20). Schoen has gathered the personal archives of many of the abortion care providers she interviewed and established a collection of them at Duke University’s Sally Binghamton Center for Women’s History and Culture where they are available for future research. She leaves the history of Planned Parenthood’s abortion provision to another historian. She also focuses on surgical abortion rather than medical abortion: the abortion pill Mifepristone was approved by the FDA in 2000, too recently for consideration in this longer history. First-person testimonies from abortion providers and patients poignantly “illustrate the lived

consequences of the politics of reproductive rights,” making this account moving as well as informative (22).

The 1970s were a period of optimism for the abortion care community, as the feminist movement and especially women’s health activists “set a standard” for high-quality, patient-centered care that “positively influenced the establishment of abortion services” following *Roe*; at the same time, the introduction of vacuum aspiration procedures for first-trimester abortions transformed them into outpatient surgeries and made abortions safer and less expensive (245). By the early 1980s, through the innovation and careful research of abortion providers, dilation and evacuation (D&E), an outpatient procedure, replaced saline as the preferred second trimester abortion procedure, improving women’s health outcomes and making it possible to safely terminate pregnancies at later gestational ages even as developments in medical technology pushed viability earlier. Schoen points out that some doctors and nurses found the D & E procedure, with its extraction of recognizable fetal parts, personally difficult to perform, and that the “ethical and aesthetic issues surrounding the procedure” remained unresolved (125). Antiabortion activists trained their focus on D&E, and the subsequently developed intact D&E procedure, highlighting gruesome fetal imagery just as ultrasounds were becoming commonly used.

An influx of fundamentalist Protestants radicalized the antiabortion movement in the 1980s. The rise of the direct action group Operation Rescue organized larger and more hostile demonstrations outside of women’s health clinics, seeking not only to confront patients but to block their entry into clinics.

Antiabortion activists depicted “abortion as the murder of a child” and used fetal images and actual fetal bodies to discourage women from seeking abortion (150). In 1988 in Chicago, for example, antiabortion activists stole as many as 5,000 fetal remains from a pathology lab, which they reassembled, photographed, mailed across the country to other antiabortion activists, and staged funerals for, presenting abortion “not [as] a medical procedure but an atrocity comparable to the Holocaust” (157).

Clinic violence terrorized and deterred providers. Already by the end of the 1980s, there was a 16 percent reduction in the number of physicians willing to perform abortions over the course of the decade (160). The violence escalated during the next decade to include killings of doctors and fire bombings of clinics. These tactics “significantly stigmatized and isolated abortion providers and clinic staff,” further reducing their numbers (201). Because law enforcement often did not mount a legal response, clinics were forced to shoulder the costs of protection themselves (180). Schoen details the incredible courage of abortion care providers like Dr. Susan Wicklund, who continued to perform abortions in four clinics in the Midwest despite being followed to her house by antiabortion activists, receiving death threats, and being physically assaulted.

Ultimately, Schoen finds, attention to fetal rights and an increasingly hostile climate have negatively impacted those delivering and receiving abortion care. While this conclusion is not surprising to anyone following the contemporary politics of reproductive rights, it is nonetheless essential for scholars to document these developments for the historical record, and Schoen has made a major contribution by

producing a comprehensive history of abortion access in the years following *Roe*. Schoen notes that the strategies of NARAL and other pro-choice organizations in presenting second trimester abortions as occurring only in a small number of hardship cases have failed in part because these claims were untrue, and provocatively argues for a “new kind of pro-choice discourse – one that acknowledge[s] the violence in second trimester abortion” (249). Abortion rights supporters, she writes, should follow the lead of the November Gang, a group of physicians who began meeting in the 1990s to articulate a vision of abortion as moral care and to develop counseling standards for screening out women who might come to regret their decisions. Only when we recognize women as moral agents capable of making decisions about pregnancy for themselves, she concludes, will women gain full reproductive control.

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