

LGBT+ CLASSICS: TEACHING, RESEARCH AND ACTIVISM -- EVENT REPORT

by *Irene Salvo*

One of the pillars of the [Women's Classical Committee-UK](#) (WCC-UK) is to advance equality and diversity in Classics. The first WCC-UK event aimed explicitly at LGBT+ staff and students was held on 12th February 2018 at the University of Reading. It was organised by Katherine Harloe (Reading), Talitha Kearey (Cambridge), and Irene Salvo (Göttingen). From the early stage of organisation and sending off of the invitations, it emerged that there is a tremendous thirst for this kind of event since our field does not give enough visibility to the intersections between queer research, teaching, and activism. From the 1970s, the queering of Classics has made significant progress, but there is still an aura of stigma, even on gender or sexuality as a valuable research topic, and episodes of discrimination are not always handled efficaciously.

The talks throughout the day mainly focused on four themes (the full programme is listed below): 1. Queer subjects in the teaching curriculum; 2. Using LGBT+ artefacts in museum collections in teaching as well as engagement programmes; 3. Reception of ancient queerness; 4. Policies and strategies of support. Ancient objects and visual evidence were on the spotlight as a potent tool for transmitting sexual knowledge in the classroom and to a wider audience. The *fil rouge* lay at the crossroads between research, teaching, and activism, in the shared belief that this intersection can positively influence the everyday lives of staff and students, making Classics departments a more welcoming and safer space.

The room was diverse not just in terms of gender identity and sexual orientation. From Reading, the LGBT+ Staff Network was involved as well as the local LGBT+ community. Notwithstanding the focus on Classics, Ancient History, and Archaeology, the disciplinary palette was broad and included among others Social Sciences, Mathematics, and Engineering. It was stressed how the "+" at the end of LGBT is important: intersex, asexuals, and pansexuals are often forgotten. LGBT is an umbrella code that tends to elide profound differences and nuances.

More than once, it was the case of stories of activities and organisation of events for promoting LGBT+ rights on top of other duties and on a voluntary basis. A lack of institutionalisation can be most detrimental for early career researchers, for whom decisions on how to invest their time may affect their career path. The younger generation of students and scholars is indeed more aware of non-binarity of gender and sexuality. However, senior LGBT+ role models and inclusive practices are essential. Training of allies can help to untangle unconscious (and conscious) bias. Policies need real enforcement because on numerous occasions they remain fine words on paper without being implemented or followed.

For future reference, it is useful to list the online resources mentioned throughout the day and produced by the presented projects:

- <https://www.glam.ox.ac.uk/outinoxford>
- <https://www.liverpool.ac.uk/lgbt-history/>
- <https://rainbowtrailuob.wordpress.com/>
- <https://www.kcl.ac.uk/artshums/ahri/centres/q@k/index.aspx>
- <https://torch.ox.ac.uk/queerstudies>
- <http://lgbthistory.exeter.ac.uk/>
- <https://twitter.com/LGBTQinHE?lang=en-gb>
- <https://intranet.birmingham.ac.uk/staff/teaching-academy/documents/public/lgbt-best-practice-guide.PDF>

Under the Twitter hashtag #WCCLGBT is possible to retrieve some of the wonderful livetweeting of the talks and keynote address.

As engaged citizens, our expertise on sexual history must contribute to raising awareness and to the creation of an inclusive workplace, especially at a time when anti-LGBT+ voices grow louder, hate crimes persist, and incidents often go unreported.

The participants enjoyed the opportunity to discuss freely current LGBT+ issues in an informal atmosphere, and other initiatives derived from the workshop. *CUCD Bulletin* has published [Alan Greaves' insights on museum-based learning](#), and upcoming papers on queering Classics growing out of this event will follow. At the upcoming [FIEC/CA conference](#), WCC-UK will be collaborating with the Lambda Classical Caucus (LCC) in organising a panel on same-sex desire and a roundtable on queer Classics and queer reception. We hope that the dialogue on LGBT+ Classics will continue to liberate minds and identities.

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PROGRAMME

Women's Classical Committee UK

LGBT+ Classics: Teaching, Research, Activism

Monday, 12th February 2018, University of Reading

- 10.15 – Welcome and Introduction, with a written message from Deborah Kamen (Seattle), Co-Chair of the Lambda Classical Caucus, USA
- 10.30 – Sebastian Matzner (London): *Queer Connections: Classics and the Gay Science*
- 10.55 – Beth Asbury, Jozie Kettle, Clara Barker (Oxford): *Out in Oxford: Hidden Stories in Plain Sight*

11.30 – Break

11.45 – Spotlight Talks

- Alan Greaves (Liverpool): *Transgender Lives in Classics: An Example of Museum-based Learning*
- Kate Nichols (Birmingham): *Working with Students to Queer University Collections*
- Rebecca Mellor (York): *Queer There and Everywhere*
- Chris Mowat (Newcastle): *The Place of Classics in LGBT Public History*
- Mara Gold (Oxford): *Beyond Sappho: Classics and the Development of Modern Lesbian Culture*
- Jessica Moody (Birkbeck): *Lesbian Hellenism? How Fin de Siècle Female Classicists Challenged our Queer Histories*

13.00 – Break

- 14.00 – Jen Grove and Rebecca Langlands (Exeter): *Ancient Artefacts and Sex Education: Exploring Gender and Sexual Diversity with the University of Exeter's "Sex & History" project*
- 14.35 – Cheryl Morgan (co-chair of OutStories Bristol): *How Not to Erase Trans History*
- 15.00 – Nicki Ward (Birmingham): *Sharing Good Practice: A Model for Embedding LGBTQ Inclusivity in the Curriculum*
- 15.25 – Maria Moscati (Sussex): *Starting as Researcher and Becoming an Activist*

15.50 – Break

- 16.05 – Roundtable on policies and support strategies with Clara Barker (Oxford), Simon Chandler-Wilde (Reading), Alan Greaves (Liverpool), Deb Heighes (Reading), Alyssa Henley (SupportU), and Jessica Moody (ECU)
- 17.15 – Keynote address by Jennifer Ingleheart (Durham), *Queer Classics: Sexuality and Scholarship from a Personal Perspective and in the Life and Work of A. E. Housman*