

**LGBTQ+**

10p

**HISTORY**



Issue 1 of  
academic year  
2020/2021:  
LGBTQ+ History

*gay  
liberation  
front*

**PUTNEY HISTORY JOURNAL**

**manifesto**

X19-1132

Produced by PHS  
History SOC



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# An introduction to LGBTQ+ history, what is it?

By Lottie Nathan



The study of LGBTQ+ history is known as Queer studies, sexual diversity studies, or LGBT studies. The first of those titles has caused some issues among learners as the word Queer has been used as a homophobic slur in the past and sometimes to this day. These studies relate to sexual orientation and gender identity and was founded on a focus of the history of these communities but are continuing to expand its horizons to include the academic study of issues raised in biology, sociology, psychology, ethics and more.

It should be noted that queer studies is not the same as queer theory, which is an analytical viewpoint within queer studies that is centred on literary studies and philosophical ideas and

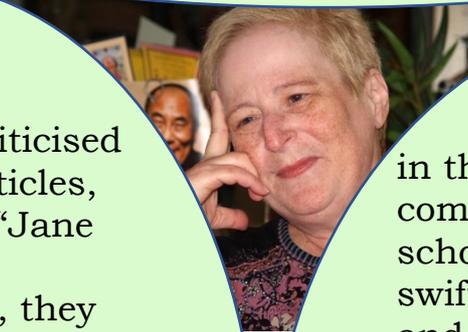
looks to challenge the socially constructed ideas of a 'normal' sexuality.

Whilst the history of the LGBTQ+ community dates back hundreds of years, the history of this study is firstly seen with Mildred "Berry" Berryman. She was an early 20th century pioneer for the study, a lesbian herself she bravely came out at the age of 15 in 1916 and announced that she wished to carry out an academic study of lesbianism at Westminster college. Her thesis was refused and some parents even pulled their children from the school. Traumatized by her experience she ran away at 16 and in 1929 began her revolution thesis: *The Psychological Phenomena of the Homosexual*. In which she argued that homosexuality was innate and benign and could be seen in many different animal species.



Although Berryman's work was very influential and brave, the field of queer studies notably took off with Eve Kosofsky Sedgwick and she has been deemed one of the founders of the study. Her first book "*Epistemology of the Closet*" was published in 1990. In this book she argues that the binary definition of sexuality that we hold limits creativity, freedom and understanding, and that the idea of being homosexual or heterosexual is just too simplistic. Although,

she was heavily criticised for many of her articles, notably one titled "Jane Austen and the masturbating girl", they helped bring Queer studies into the mainstream and now this course is offered at many leading universities across the world. Additionally, four US states now require the teaching of LGBTQ+ history in schools and recently Scotland has become the first country



in the world to make this a compulsory field of education for school children. England has swiftly followed in their footsteps and it is now mandatory for all schools in England have LGBTQ+ inclusive lessons as of 2021. The new guidelines state that all students need to understand the importance of "equality and respect", and teachers have been told the lessons must be "fully integrated into their programmes of study for this area of the curriculum rather than delivered as a standalone unit or lesson".

This decision had received a great response, with the Head of Education Programmes at Stonewall, Sidonie Bertrand-Shelton, saying that learning about different families from a young age "helps create inclusive environments so everyone feels they belong." Additionally, Josh Bradlow, policy manager at Stonewall, said it would have been "life-changing" for him if he received the same education at school.

## Homosexuality in Ancient Greece

By Polly Cameron

The question of attitudes towards homosexuality in Ancient Greece is a tough one to answer. First of all, 'Ancient Greece' was, in fact, a mix of hundreds of rival micro-states, with their own calendars, customs and dialects as well as their own local versions of Greek homosexuality. Therefore, it is hard to pin down exactly what the attitudes towards homosexuality were as it varied from place to place. Secondly, perception of Ancient Greek society and social attitudes has been distorted and so it's difficult to sort fact from fiction. Oscar Wilde is a notable example of someone championing the idealised view of Ancient Greece as a safe haven for homosexual couples, citing Plato's philosophy on homosexuality in his famous "Love that Dare Not Speak Its Name" speech which defended his charge of sodomy. However, were Ancient Greek attitudes towards homosexuality actually as free as assumed?

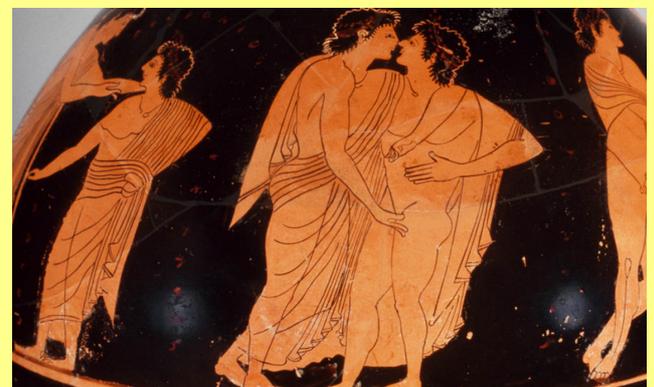
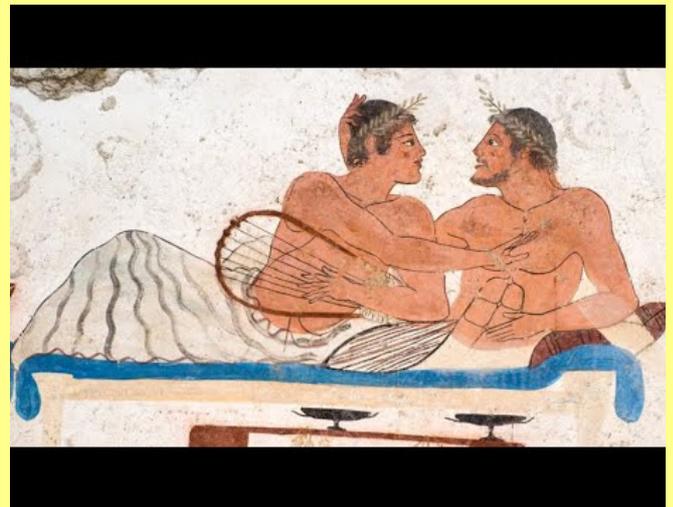


The most well-known type of homosexual relationship in Ancient Greece was pederastic. Pederastic relationships were socially acknowledged romantic relationships between an adult male (the erastes) and a younger male (the eromenos) usually in his late teens. These relationships were closely controlled through various rules and codes of conduct from regulating the kinds of wooing gifts that could be used as well as establishing how keen a partner could appear to be. The strict nature of this relationship therefore indicates that attitudes towards homosexuality despite being permissive, were not free.

Additionally, attitudes often varied, even from one person's perspective. For instance, sometimes Plato seems to regard same-sex couples as the pinnacle of the ideal relationship. In Plato's *Symposium*, one of the speakers, Aristophanes, describes a vision of same-sex love which closely models modern ideas of companionate relationships or even soulmates. However, at other points, such as in his *Laws*, Plato is dismissive of same-sex relations and regards them as unnatural and not fit for proper society. This severe inconsistency of attitudes towards homosexuality makes it difficult to establish just one answer.

We also know very little about the lives of same sex attracted women in Ancient Greece. The lives of women were not considered as important to write about and so there are very few contemporary sources. Our best evidence remains in the fragments of poems of Sappho that have come down to us. Yet even here, the picture of homosexuality is not entirely clear. Sappho's poems are in praise of women and same-sex relationships but are often tinged with melancholy over love rejected or made impossible through forced marriage.

The picture of same-sex relations that we get from Ancient Greece is ultimately a complicated one. Nevertheless, the evidence available indicates that unfortunately, attitudes were not as accepting as many believe. Complicated systems of courtship and inconsistent opinions reveal that homosexuality was a contentious subject and indicates that Ancient Greek culture was hugely complex and diverse in its attitudes and behaviours. Studying attitudes to same-sex love amongst the Ancient Greeks is a reminder that there is a difference between history and nostalgia, and that it is dangerous to confuse them.



## The History of LGBTQ+ Slurs

CONTENT WARNING

By Abigail Denning and Lex Lemer

In this article, we have chosen to explore the origins of slurs used against members of the LGBTQ+ community. In the 20th and 21st century this large community has re-written its narrative in terms of rights, representation, marriage and has worked tirelessly to remove the stigma around their members. In the present we all understand how deeply offensive the slurs mentioned below are, but why? How did they originate? How did they become such a term of hate and disgust? As a society, we should be consistently trying to grow, learn and better ourselves and what better way to do that than to understand the origin of the derogatory terms which propelled the LGBTQ+ community's plight for equality.

### **'F\*ggot'**

Arguably, 'f\*ggot' is the most offensive, degrading term used to target gay people. F\*ggot originally meant a bundle of sticks used to

set fires for burning heretics (a person who maintains a religious opinion contrary to those accepted by their church). Under Mary I, 290 people were accused of heresy and had to gather f\*ggots and carry them to the fire that was being built for them. Heretics who changed their beliefs, to avoid being killed, had to wear a 'f\*ggot' design on their sleeve to show others that they opposed the church. This was when the term 'f\*ggot' changed meaning and it became associated with anything that was a burden. The term became disparaging towards gay people in the early 20th century in America to refer to a less masculine man. In terms of homosexuality, the slur was used as early as 1914 in Jackson and Hellyer's 'A Vocabulary of Criminal Slang' which listed the following example under drag: "All the f\*ggots (sissies) will be dressed in drag at the ball tonight". Other slurs such as queer and poof are much more common in the UK since 'f\*ggot' refers to a type of meatball and 'f\*g' is often used as slang for a cigarette. In the modern-day, the 'Think Before You Speak' campaign, which was launched in 2008, has strived to end the casual use of this word and educate people of the deep-rooted history of it.



Although in the 21st century, people continue to use the word 'f\*g' to describe cigarettes, many do not understand the rich, horrible history that is attached to the word. Like many of the words discussed below, 'f\*g' was intolerably oppressive to gay men and is, in our opinion, the most offensive word in this list. Now, in the melting pot of cultures and sexuality that is London, saying 'f\*g' is most definitely frowned upon and demonstrates a complete ignorance and lack of self-awareness to repressive history.

### **“That’s so gay”**

Dating back to the 12th century, the word gay comes from the old French term 'gai' which translates to 'full of joy'. In the 19th century, the word 'gay' referred to those who enjoyed a hedonistic lifestyle such as mingling with prostitutes or, ironically, men who have slept with many different women. Before 'gay' ever came to describe same-sex attraction, the most common term used to refer to gays was 'homosexual'. This term was linked with the customary opinion that being gay was a psychological disorder. In 1955, the term gay appeared in the Oxford Dictionary as a definition for 'a homosexual boy'. However, gay people had been using the term among themselves for long before then. In 1960, 'gay' became the word used by people who believed in gay liberation and those fighting for the decriminalisation of same-sex relationships and equality. This completely transformed the word to be a symbol of pride and has been taken up positively by society. Today, gay is a socially accepted term for homosexuals but when used negatively, it carries with it a history of judgement and oppression. It also completely ignores all the work gay people have done to alter our culture's meaning of the word.

Without gay people, where would be now? Without Shakespeare, Oscar Wilde, Alan Turing, world would literature, the would have wouldn't have (a personal ours)! The completely



Ellen DeGeneres, RuPaul Charles, the have less great Second World War ended later and... we RuPaul's Drag Race favourite show of phrase "that's so gay" undermines all the

important things that gay people have done for the world and

makes it sound as if being gay is a negative thing, even though it is not.

### **‘T\*anny’**

T\*anny was originally a term that transgender people used to refer to themselves. Some say that the reason why transgender people hate the word is that it makes light of all the many different hardships that transgender people must face. However, at the time this term was first starting to be used, being transgender was still very taboo and coming out would have caused a wave of shock. This is why some liked to refer to themselves as t\*anny because it would make being transgender feel normal, which it wasn't considered at the time. This term was coined by pornographers to market trans women as sexual objects. In today's society, 't\*anny' is used as a slur to imply 'doing femininity badly'. This is why some transgender people have argued that the trans female spectrum has the right to reclaim the word while those on the trans male spectrum do not. On the other hand, historically, people have paid more attention to trans females while trans males have been left almost invisible. So possibly, the reason why the slur is mostly associated with females is that people were simply more aware of them. Recently there have been some progressions. In 2017, the word was banned by several major media style books and considered hate speech on Facebook. RuPaul said "I love the word t\*anny," and how the word was not being redefined by the transgender community, but only by "fringe people who are looking for storylines to strengthen their identity as victims". Some argue that RuPaul does not have a foot in the argument because he is not strictly transgender and therefore is not affected by the word to the extent that transgenders do.



Just like the other words in this article, 't\*anny' is deeply offensive and stems from straight people making light of transgender people's struggles. As much as RuPaul is a gay icon, he is not transgender therefore he cannot personally relate to a transgender person's struggles so he should not be commenting on whether he thinks the

word “t\*anny” is socially acceptable to say or not. The word “t\*anny” is offensive to both male and female trans people and should not be used to describe anyone’s gender.

### **‘D\*ke’**

The deeply offensive slur ‘d\*ke’ is used by ignorant people to oppress lesbians and pigeonhole them into being stereotypical lesbians. The origins of the word ‘d\*ke’ stem from the word hermaphrodite which was abbreviated to morphodike. A hermaphrodite, like a traditional lesbian, has features making it hard to distinguish if they’re male or female. Another theory is that the word was transliterated from the name of the leader of the Iceni tribe - Boudicca. Men tried to oppress the widowed Boudicca and her single daughters by raping, flogging and beating them because she didn’t have a male partner. This is yet another example of men trying to oppress powerful women because they won’t be their sexual partners, so they assume that they are gay. Even though d\*ke is considered a derogatory word by GLAAD, the word has now been reclaimed by lesbians worldwide as a symbol of pride and individuality. This repossession stems from the 1960s (often known as the ‘Gay Liberation’) during a time of change and growth in America where the oppressed began to demand equal treatment.



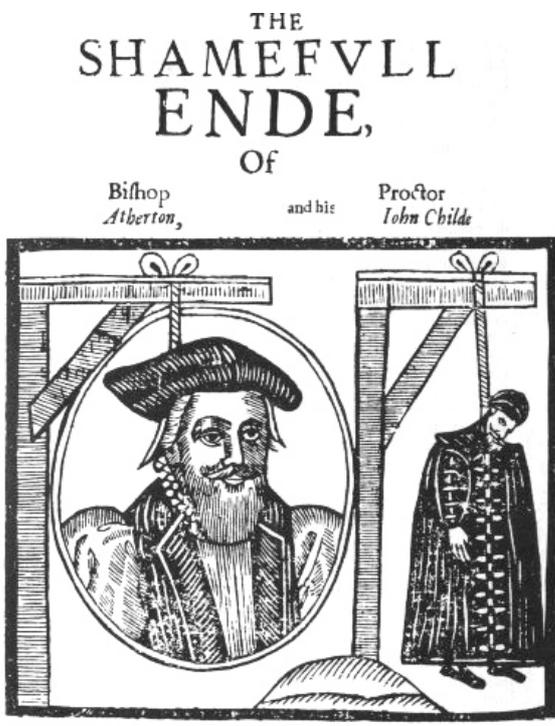
The active use of the word ‘d\*ke’ is oppressive to gay people as it stems from a place of hatred and disgust. In the 21st century, there is no place in society for negative, outdated attitudes like this and by saying ‘d\*ke’ it is disrespectful to the progress that the gay community has made.

To conclude, the main message we would like people to take away from this article is that you should think about what you say and that words are the most powerful force there is. In a time like this, where our physical contact with people is limited, what we say can leave the most impact on those in our lives. Choose your words wisely as you never know the meaning that they hold to someone else.

# History of Homophobia in England

By Fleur O'Reilly

Male homosexuality was first targeted in the 1533 Buggery Act which completely outlawed sodomy in Britain with the punishment of death. In 1540 the 1<sup>st</sup> Baron Hungerford was the first victim of the new law as the first executed on grounds of beggary, treason and practising witchcraft. Although his downfall was also highly political due to his associations with Thomas Cromwell who he was executed alongside. He was the only man in the Tudor period to be executed on charges of buggery and there are suggestions that he was executed for the treason and the charge of sodomy was only to humiliate him.



For the non-noble men convicted with sodomy, they would be hanged at the gallows. Up until 1818, those convicted of sodomy may also have been sentenced to stand in the pillory and were set upon by the crowds with rotten food and dead animals, but also sometimes stones and blood.

Many nobles would instead flee into exile or remain unaffected if their illicit relationships and tendencies came to light.

It took until 1861 when the Offences Against the Person Act was passed that the death penalty was removed and replaced with a punishment of a minimum of 10 years imprisonment. The last men to be hanged for sodomy had been in 1835 with many petitioning the Home Office for clemency and the Privy Council even heard their case but it did nothing for those two men. However, in 1885 the Criminal Law Amendment Act changed the law to stretch to include any acts of homosexuality illegal, whether or not a witness was present. This meant that something as small as an affectionate letter between two men would be enough to bring a prosecution.

This is the law that Oscar Wilde fell victim to in 1895.



Female homosexuality was never directly targeted by any legislation. Although there was an attempt to introduce discriminatory legislation in 1921, both houses of parliament believed that by passing a law they would be drawing more attention to and encouraging the possibility of female homosexuality.



Roberta Cowell- a fighter pilot in WW2, she was the first known British Trans women to undergo sex reassignment surgery.

It wasn't until the post-war period that transgender identities really began to be explored. However, the end of the war and return to normality saw a significant increase in arrests and prosecutions of homosexual men. Many of these arrests included high profile men who held positions within government and national institutions. It was this rise in prosecutions that led to the Report of the Departmental Committee on Homosexual Offences and Prostitution, otherwise known as the Wolfenden Report, that was published in 1957. This report was commissioned in response to evidence that homosexuality could not legitimately be regarded as a disease and aimed to bring about change in the current law. It wasn't until ten years later, in 1967 that the Sexual Offences Act was passed which partially legalised same-sex acts between two men over the age of 21.

The first pride march in England took place in 1972 and has taken place every year since (although arguably not this year due to covid-19). Margaret Thatcher introduced in 1988 Section 28 of the Local Government Act which banned local authorities from 'promoting homosexuality' or 'pretended family relationships', and prohibited councils from funding educational materials and projects perceived to 'promote homosexuality'. The legislation prevented the discussion of LGBT issues and stopped pupils getting the support they needed. Section 28 was repealed in 2003, and Prime Minister David Cameron apologised for the legislation in 2009. Age of consent equality did not come about until 2001 and it took until 2004 for the Civil Partnership Act which allowed for same-sex couples to legally enter into a binding partnership, although Marriage Act didn't occur until 2013. 2004 also saw the Gender Recognition Act which gave trans people full legal recognition of their gender. In 2010 the Equality Act was passed which gave LGBTQ+ employees protection from discrimination, harassment and victimisation at work.



## Gossiping about queer royals

By Florence Jarvis



Turns out, the British Royal Fam has a rich and slanderous queer history from William II to Queen Anne. Because most of the time these relationships were very hushed up, we have limited evidence to go by, and alas, can merely speculate. But speculate we shall!! Let's have a gossip about queer royals.

First up, it's William II of England, who was King of England from 1087-1100. He was notorious for his predominantly male court, and for making (according to some sources) his subjects grow out their hair and wear tight blouses. One scholar, Frank Barlow, describes these men as a 'band of effeminates'. It's also been noted that he never married and was childless, and many accused him of being 'shameful' and 'lustful' at the time. Is any of this concrete evidence? No. Is it enough for us to speculate? Definitely.

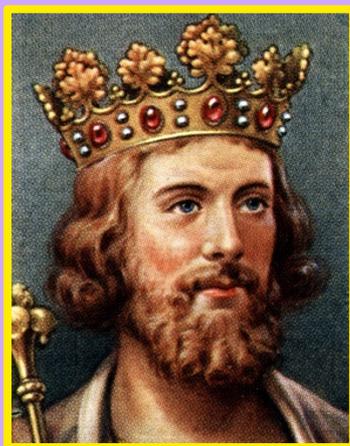
Our second monarch is the Lionheart himself, Richard I, who ruled from 1189-1199. He's famous for battling Saladin during the crusades, rebelling

against his father (Henry II), and should be famous for his relationship with Philip II of France. For once, we have a primary source for this piece of gossip, but whether this makes it any more reliable is up to you. Roger de Hoveden, who was a chronicler who knew Richie personally, wrote 'Richard...remained with Philip, the King of France...and at night their beds did not separate them...the king of England was absolutely astonished at the passionate love between them.' Can't get any more scandalous than that, can you?!?! Some party pooping historians have pointed out that this didn't necessarily have sexual connotations at the time and was more a symbol of their political alliance against Henry II and the unity of France and England. There's also the small matter of Richard's illegitimate son. But whatever, history is subjective.

Next in line is Edward II, one of the famously gay monarchs. One chronicle of the time says that he entered ~~ed~~ into a

'fraternitatus feodus' ('oath of brotherhood'). Yeah right. Reign: 1307-1827. Irrelevant wife: Isabella of France. Suspicious 'brother': Piers Gaveston, Earl of Cornwall. Edward has got it all! It's not great for LGBTQ+ representation that Eddie is best known for his humiliating defeat at the Battle of Bannockburn in 1314, or that he was eventually murdered, but what can you do.

After Edward is Richard II, who is well known for succeeding Edward III to the throne at the ripe old age of 10, but probably better known because Shakespeare wrote a play about him. He ruled from 1377-1399 and dealt with the Peasants' Revolt aged 14! This time the 'favourite advisor' \*wink\* was called Robert de Vere. Richard showered him with gifts, and even invented a title for him: Marquess of Dublin - the medieval equivalent of roses. De Vere was much hated because of his closeness with the King, and many nobles refused to attend his funeral. Homophobia at its finest :(



Next up is James I of England (who was also James VI of Scotland - greedy). Like Richard, James made giving his crushes titles to try and impress them a personal hobby. He made Esme Stuart the Duke of Lennox (Esme was also his cousin, but we are swiftly glossing over that), then later

Robert Carr the Earl of Somerset. We have it in writing that James said to his next suitor, George Villiers, 'I naturally so love your person', but I guess he felt that kind words weren't enough, because he promptly made him the Duke of Buckingham. Most juicy is the fact that Villiers and Stuart are buried either side of James in Westminster Abbey!! I imagine this was awkward for his wife, Anne of Denmark, with whom James had eight children. During his reign (1603-25), James oversaw the British colonisation of the Americas, survived the gunpowder plot, and enacted harsh punishments for sodomy. Not sure we can ignore this particular brand of hypocrisy, so James, I'm afraid you're cancelled.

After James, we have William III (reigned 1689-1702). Will was married to Mary II (daughter of James II), but she died in 1694, leaving rumours around Will's sexuality to circulate with vigour. Once again, the evidence for this is found in the hasty promotions of two very young courtiers, and his lack of a mistress. They were affirmed by Queen Anne (monarch after Will), who sneakily said 'his heart... be not for women'. Clearly, Anne doesn't care about loyalty, but I don't mind because it makes for excellent gossip.



Anne of Great Britain is next, so named because England and Scotland were finally united during her reign (1702-14), and thus she

became the first ever Queen of Great Britain. Anne was, literally, a bisexual Queen. She was married to Prince George of Denmark and is said to have got pregnant 17 times with him, although sadly all of her children died. But she also had a fairly well-documented affair with Sarah Churchill, her lady in waiting. Some people even resorted to complimenting Sarah, because they knew she had a huge influence on Anne.

Unfortunately for Sarah, she got a bit big for her boots and Anne dumped her. She was replaced with Abigail Masham, and apparently, Sarah spread all sorts (I would love to know what) about Anne and Abi because she was so jealous.

Lord Ivar Mountbatten is not a monarch, but he's making it onto the list because a) he's still alive and b) he's fabulous. Ivar, age 57, is the Queen's cousin and the great, great, great grandson of Queen Victoria. He married and had three children with Penelope Thompson, before becoming the first member of the British Royal Family to come out and eventually have a gay wedding in 2018, with James Coyle. The best part is that his ex-wife was the one to give him away (according to Tatler), and according to the Daily Mail (I warned you this was gossip, okay?) he spent lockdown with his husband, three children and ex-wife. It sounds like a posh modern family.

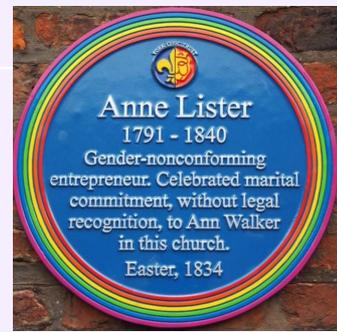


So that's all the queer British monarchs we're aware of. Honourable non-British mentions are: Galba, Roman monarch in 68CE with a reputation for being ruthless and being gay; Philippe I (1640-1701), King Louis XIV's openly gay younger brother, who had two wives and numerous male lovers; and Catherine the Great, Empress of Russia 1762-96, who is known to have had a particular fondness for her ladies in waiting. I'm not sure we'll ever be taught about these histories in the classroom, because none of them can really be proven, but I think it's fair to say that Britain has an undeniably queer history, even (especially?) amongst the nobility.



# Anne Lister: Gentleman Jack

BY Sophia Wyllie



Following the BBC's historical drama TV series "*Gentleman Jack*", Anne Lister is today recognised as "the first modern lesbian". But who was Anne Lister and what made her unique?

Born in 1791, Anne Lister was ahead of her time in many ways. Not only was she a financially independent woman, a rarity in the early 1800s, she openly rejected societal norms regarding her sexuality. Her remarkable diaries record her systematic seduction of a plethora of women, as well as details of her day-to-day living and her financial concerns relating to her Yorkshire ancestral home, Shibden Hall, through the period of the Industrial Revolution.

Anne Lister grew up in Halifax, West Yorkshire, the second child and eldest daughter of Jeremy Lister and Rebecca Battle of Welton. Although Rebecca conceived four sons and two daughters, only Anne and her younger sister Mariam survived past the age of 20. Anne was well educated, tutored from home in Skelfler House until the age of seven when she enrolled in a local boarding school where she met her first love, Eliza Raine. The relationship did not last, and Lister was asked to leave the school at the age of fifteen, only returning after Raine had left. Raine had wanted to spend their adult lives together, but this hope was crushed

after Lister involved herself with a couple of day school pupils, sending Raine into turmoil and ultimately to Clifton Asylum.

Lister went on to inherit Shibden Hall in 1836 after the death of her aunt, although in fact she had been in charge of it for a decade previously. As well as Shibden Hall, Lister owned properties in town and shares in canal and railway industries, which gave her financial freedom.

Lister had multiple relationships with women throughout her life and only ten years before her death in 1840 did she finally "settle down" with Ann Walker. This enduring lesbian relationship is one of the key reasons Lister is considered an icon today. One Easter Sunday, the couple decided to take communion together and from then on considered themselves married in all but the eyes of the law. For the nineteenth century, this was an incredible act of defiance against a staunchly patriarchal society. By contrast, Brontë, Hardy and Austen were only just beginning to explore such independence in fictional female characters.

Of course, none of this analysis would be so readily available without the modern discovery and publication of Lister's diaries. Anne Lister was an avid diarist from an

early age, starting at the age of fifteen in 1806. The habit grew into a sort of obsession in her adulthood when she referred to her diaries as her “private memorial” that helped to “compose” and “comfort” her.

For the first four years of writing the diaries are in loose sheet form, comprising only 20,000 words (not a lot for a journal of five million words). From 1817, she began to write her journals in systematic volumes and in increasing detail. To record her more intimate feelings and judgements on character, she used a complex code consisting of algebra and Greek symbols which was only decoded in 2011 by a descendant, John Lister, and his friend Arthur Burrell. Helen Whitbread, a Halifax born historian and writer completed the work of translating the diaries into the form we know today.

Lister clearly had an incredibly acute sense of self and frequently acknowledges her love for the opposite sex in her diary entries commenting that she “loved and only loved the fairer sex and thus beloved by them in turn, my heart revolts from any love but theirs”. As previously mentioned, it was no accident that Lister was seemingly always entangled in flirtatious situations between other women - one of the techniques of seduction she used was to mention books which touched upon lesbianism or male homosexuality and then critically observe her companions to judge their tendencies. For instance, in early October 1824 Miss

Mackenzie, a visitor who is her match in the classics, passes her a confidential note: “I have a question to ask you. Êtes-vous Achilles?’ I laughed & said she made me blush.... Brought Miss Mack into my room. Joked with her about her question. Said it was exceedingly well put. She said I was the only one in the house to whom she could have written it, because the only one who would have so soon understood it, that is, who would have understood the allusion to take it that way.” Here Miss Mackenzie was alluding to the classical story depicting Achilles dressing as a girl in the court of Lycomedes in order to escape the oracle that says he is to die in the battle of Troy. This was seen as extremely provocative and gives an insight into the conversations of sophisticated women almost two hundred years ago. Lister’s diaries are littered with details of this nature, and prove that, despite the male-dominated society, there were exceptions and rebellions alike.



## *The first modern lesbian- Anne Lister* **Born 1791, Died 1840**

By Georgie Middlemiss

*In the 19th Century, Anne Lister writes in her diary under candlelight "I love and only love, the fairer sex."*

Anne Lister is a historical figure like no other, with a striking personality that is guaranteed to captivate anyone who hears her story. From the age of fifteen until the very day she died aged forty-nine, Anne wrote diaries documenting the every detail of her day. Without a doubt, there is no LGBT document in history equal to the intricately detailed accounts of Anne's relationships. In a skilled secret code based on the Greek alphabet and algebra, her diaries not only documented her ordinary daily routine but also every last intricate detail of Anne's thrillingly romantic relationships with the women she admired.

Growing up in Halifax, West Yorkshire, the setting of famous gothic novels such as Wuthering Heights and Jane Eyre, Anne lived in a large home she was due to inherit: Shribden Hall. This was 1834 when homosexual acts were illegal and frowned upon across the world. Her story, finally revealed to the public in 1982, highlights the remarkable story of a powerful young woman not afraid to embrace her inner desires and go against everything the Victorian society threw at women.

*"I had kissed and pressed Mrs Barlow on my knee till I had a complete fit of passion,"*

*"...Miss W talks as if she would be glad to take me – then if I say anything decisive she hesitates to. I tell her it is all her money which is in the way. The fact is, she is as she was before, but determined to get away from the Sutherlands and feels the want of me. But I need to take someone with more mind and less money. Steph is right: she would be a great pothor. I have nothing serious to say to her – she wants better manning than I can manage."*

*"I know my own heart and understand my fellow man. But I am made unlike anyone I have ever met. I dare to say I am like no one in the whole world."*

*"Am certainly attentive to her but cautiously, without any impropriety that could be laid hold of. Yet my manners are certainly peculiar, not all masculine but rather softly gentleman-like. I know how to please girls."*



The discovery and revelation of her story is an intriguing tale on its own. Picture John Lister, Anne's ancestor in the 1890s, reading the mysterious code of Anne's journals with a furious curiosity to figure out exactly what secrets required such scrupulous coding. With the help of his good friend Arthur Burrell, the two men finally managed to crack the code after laborious effort. But the potential of great shame being brought upon the Lister name if the scandalous diaries were ever discovered led John to carefully hide all Anne's diaries. Only a century later in 1982 was Anne Lister's secret finally brought to light by Helena Whitbread: a 52-year old teacher who was intrigued by stories of Anne's diaries. After John Lister's death, Arthur Burrell had, at last, handed the diaries and coding details over to the council. After minimal research, the diaries were stored away again in Halifax Library. Helena Whitbread procured all the diaries and coding from the library for research. Until then, these had aroused no particular interest. She painstakingly decoded all the diaries, in turn helping shape modern understanding of lesbian history. At long last Anne Lister's powerful history got the recognition it deserved.

In her dairies her many passionate love affairs with local heiresses are revealed in excruciating detail. At her boarding school, Anne's first love affair began when she was sent to live in the school's attic. With another outcast named Eliza also confined to the school attic, Anne was involved in a passionate relationship. Anne's eventual

rejection of Eliza sent her into a deep depression, causing her to spend the rest of her life in a lunatic asylum. The love of Anne's life was named Mariana Belcombe and claimed her heart for many years. Mariana eventually married a wealthy widower, leaving Anne heartbroken. Along with various other lovers, Anne's final romance was with Ann Walker. The two lovers conducted various "marriage rituals" and spent the rest of their lives together until Anne's untimely death in 1840.

Anne Lister's diaries provide a powerful insight on lesbian history. She stands as a role model to all of us that we should embrace every part of ourselves wholeheartedly; no matter how others tear you down.



# Significance of the Bloomsbury Group, and the influence of their literature in LGBTQ+ history

By Lara McColm

The artists, writers, intellectuals, and freethinkers that formed the Bloomsbury Group are famous for their history of self-expression, and their lives and loves continue as an inspiration. They were audacious in their thinking about gender and sexuality, and radically accepting in their approach towards others. Often, they're renowned for their individualistic, unconventional personalities and unorthodox lifestyles which outraged people of their time and still fascinates many today

So, who exactly were the Bloomsbury Group? How did they earn their legacy as literary, artistic and queer progressionists? And how did they lay the foundations for the monumental shifts in the LGBTQ+ rights movement that followed after them?

From the exploration of gender fluidity in Virginia Woolf's famous novel *Orlando*, to hers, Duncan Grant's, John Maynard Keynes' and other group members' own experiences with LGBTQ+ relationships, to E.M Forster's novel *Maurice*, exploring and critiquing early 20<sup>th</sup> century Britain through the eyes of a young gay man, the Bloomsbury Group have proven themselves to be pioneers of their time in the progression of LGBTQ+ rights.

## **Who were the Bloomsbury Group?**

Best known as a collection of intellectuals and artists, the Bloomsbury Group frequently met in the home of Vanessa Bell to discuss literature, philosophy, politics and the arts. The group began in 1905, as a gathering of friends living near to Bloomsbury in London, many of whom had acquainted one another during their time at Cambridge University. They continued for around 30 years, with members becoming vast and sprawling and key members changing before and after the First World War. Famous members of the group included the painter Vanessa Bell and her sister, novelist and critic, Virginia Woolf, the art critic Clive Bell, novelist E.M. Forster, artist Duncan Grant, biographer Lytton Strachey, publisher Leonard Woolf and the economist John Maynard Keynes.



They came from privileged backgrounds, raised as metropolitan elites, and with wealth and status came a united spirit of self-confidence, yet an equally strong desire to rebel. They were drawn together by their liberal, radical beliefs, and this extended beyond politics into the realms of lifestyle and sexual experimentation. They critiqued the societal restraints and conventions of their parents' generation and sought freedom in artistic, social and sexual terms. Much of the group was comprised of LGBTQ+ men and women and there were frequent relationships and complicated affairs between various members of their circle. Their combined intellectual excellence, alongside their individualistic, and idiosyncratic, free-thinking lifestyle choices, meant they were able to play a key role in exposing the LGBTQ+ spectrum to the traditional Victorian upper classes.



**How did relationships within the group, particularly those of John Maynard Keynes and Duncan Grant, influence the perception of the LGBTQ+ spectrum?**

Not only did the Bloomsbury Group challenge LGBTQ+ issues through art and literature, but their own bohemian lifestyles also pushed the boundaries about what was acceptable and, in many ways, influenced the course of history.

*Dorothy Parker famously remarked on the Bloomsbury Group that they, "lived in squares, painted in circles and loved in triangles".*

Much is known about Keynes' relationships, with Grant amongst others, especially during his time at Eton and Cambridge. This is largely due to the fact he kept diaries, from 1901 to 1915, in which many of his relationships and experiences, almost exclusively with men, were collated. Keynes was open about his many affairs with other men, and often included detailed accounts of sexual encounters. His diaries capture and evidence the role he took in helping dissolve the conservative Victorian attitudes, particularly those of The Cambridge Apostles, a Cambridge society of selected intellectuals, of which Keynes, alongside Lytton Strachey, Leonard Woolf and E.M Forster, was a member of. He and Strachey were lifelong friends although, on more than one occasion, they became romantic rivals. In one instance, Keynes fell in love with painter Duncan Grant, who was originally involved with Strachey, and the pair were partners for many years, famous in the Bloomsbury group's love circles.

During the summer of 1908, Duncan Grant wrote letters to John Maynard Keynes. They're particularly famous as Grant's feelings of anguish and longing for some comfort of commonality are almost palpable. Often, Grant was described as free of sexual shame due to his firm belief in his right to love whoever he chose, his numerous affairs, and his frank self-expression, which influenced much of his artwork. However, his letters to Keynes were an example of the sense of alienation he felt, at the hands of his sexuality, in which he looked to his lifelong friend, and

occasional lover, for comfort and reassurance that he was not alone. Even despite his free, expressive nature, he sought the security of shared experience and the company of someone who understood the harsh realities of what it meant to be a gay man living in Britain before decriminalisation in 1967. In one letter he writes, “You cannot imagine how much I want to scream sometimes here for want of being able to say something I mean. It’s not only that one’s a sodomite that one has to hide but one’s whole philosophy of life; one’s feelings for inanimate things I feel would shock some people. Here I am surrounded by them, not a soul to speak to... it’s so damnable to think that they can only think me a harmless sort of lunatic or a dangerous criminal whom they wouldn’t associate with at any price.” These letters are interesting in the way they reveal how Grant linked sexuality to a broader sense of difference, in the perception of the world. He saw his sexual orientation as a central organising structure of his vision, his “philosophy of life”. The explicit connection between sexuality and perception of life leads us to consider: how exactly does sexuality inform the way in which we see the world? Has it changed with the progression of LGBTQ+ rights? Duncan Grant had numerous relationships and affairs, involving varying degrees of sexual and emotional passion with many men, including David Garnett, George Bergen, Angus Davidson, Eddie Sackville-West and Peter Morris. In retrospect, his lifestyle was extremely similar to the concept of serial monogamy adopted by many young people in Britain today, regardless of gender or sexuality. Grant was ahead of his time in many ways, known to

say that one should “never be ashamed”. He sought fervently to change the closed-minded attitudes of the conservative Victorian gentry and he, as well as Keynes and Strachey, helped pave the way to a new era of LGBTQ+ rights.

Later in life, Grant, Keynes and Lytton Strachey all ended up living with women, although they did so in very different ways, and on very different terms. John Maynard Keynes surprised his friends by falling in love with a woman, the ballerina Lydia Lopokova. Whilst Lytton Strachey lived with Dora Carrington, and although he was almost exclusively attracted to men and she pursued relationships with women, they loved one another up until his death in 1931. Duncan Grant famously settled into an open domestic partnership with Vanessa Bell. The pair were bound together by mutual love and loyalty and lived in Charleston in Sussex, where they were frequently visited by Bloomsbury Group members. Grant continued to have relations with several other men including David Garnet, the British writer that eventually went on to marry Grant and Vanessa’s daughter Angelica.

Evidently, Dorothy Parker’s remark on the Bloomsbury Set, “love in triangles” was accurate, their sexual relationships were famously complicated. As a group, they rebelled against their austere Victorian upbringings and were fearless in the way they lived, without shame, as outsiders of the societal expectation. Together, they lived, emotionally, intellectually and sexually paving the way to a more progressive and free society.

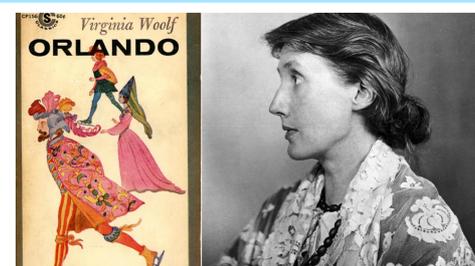
## Virginia Woolf and *Orlando*

It would be remiss to discuss the Bloomsbury Group's influence in LGBTQ+ history without regards to Virginia Woolf and her 1928 novel *Orlando*. Woolf is famous for her literary influence, from her feminist texts including *A Room of One's Own*, to the famous modernist classic *Mrs Dalloway*. She was born Adeline Virginia Stephen and she, her sister Vanessa and brother Adrian, moved to the Bloomsbury area of London after their father's death, when they sold their family home in Hyde Park Gate. Virginia married Leonard Woolf in 1910, after they'd met and fallen in love as members of the Bloomsbury Group and together, the two of them established Hogarth Printing Press. *Orlando* was written at the height of Woolf's career. She was entranced by her lover, Vita Sackville-West, and Vita and her husband, Harold Nicholson, both openly bisexual, proved great models for the basis of *Orlando*. After finishing *To the Lighthouse* in 1927, Woolf was prompted by her attachment to Vita, and by her growing interest in biographical literature, to begin writing *Orlando*. The book is biographical, following the life of a poet, Orlando, who undergoes a sex change, transitioning from a man to a woman. It spans over 300 years (1588–1928), although Orlando ages only thirty-six years, which allows exploration across generations and the encountering of several important figures throughout history, including other characters who change between sexes and identify gender fluidly.

*Orlando* is frequently discussed as an extraordinarily progressive book for its time. Contextually, it was published 34 years before sex

between two men was decriminalised (1962) and 21 years before the word transsexual was even coined (1949). However, it's not only highly regarded as a progressive LGBTQ+ novel but also as one of the most beautiful love letters ever written. Woolf found a literary muse in her lover and she wrote in her diary that Orlando was to be, "*Vita, only with a change from one sex to another.*" Sackville-West's own son, Nigel Nicolson, said of the book: "*The effect of Vita on Virginia is all contained in Orlando, the longest and most charming love letter in literature*". He described, "*In which she explores Vita, weaves her in and out of the centuries, tosses her from one sex to the other, plays with her, dresses her in furs, lace and emeralds, teases her, flirts with her, drops a veil of mist around her.*" It was an extremely popular book when it was published and is still among Woolf's most popular works today. The combination of the novel's ground-breaking and energetic nature, Woolf's infatuation with Vita and the plotline which spans over three centuries of English history, creates a sense of love and gender experimentation which was able to transcend the societal boundaries of the time and is still an inspiration today.

Similarly to other Bloomsbury Group members, Virginia Woolf expressed her own feelings and criticisms of society in her literature. *Orlando* explores the nature of gender difference and sexual identity and is replete with lesbian and bisexual



undertones. Although, Woolf had to be cautious; so, there is never any explicit description of homosexuality. *Orlando* was published near the time of the trial of Radclyffe Hall's autobiographical novel, *The Well of Loneliness*, for obscenity for her portrayal of lesbian love. In fact, while waiting for the trial of *The Well of Loneliness*, Radclyffe Hall's lover, Una Troubridge, read *Orlando* to her to help her endure the stress. Woolf managed to subtly critique the repressive, austere, Victorian social rituals with one of the first recorded stories about gender fluidity. *Orlando* is considered a work of feminist fiction and a progressive LGBTQ+ novel of great weight, regularly on the list of monumental books with LGBTQ+ representation today. Its influence was monumental to the progression of LGBTQ+ rights and Virginia Woolf was years beyond her time in its creation.

### **E.M Forster's *Maurice***

Another significant work of LGBTQ+ literature, written by Bloomsbury Group member E.M Forster, is *Maurice*. E.M Forster attended Cambridge University and was a member of the Bloomsbury Group in the 1910s and 1920s. Forster was 16 in 1895 when Oscar Wilde was famously sentenced to two years of hard labour for homosexual acts. This cemented the societal unacceptability of homosexuality to Forster and cast a difficult shadow over his sexual maturation and identity. Forster was open about his homosexuality to his close friends, but not to the public. During his lifetime he never married, but he had a number of male lovers. Most of E.M Forster's published literature was catered to the conventional, Victorian audience, however, in 1911, he remarked in his diary that he had tired of these novels. He felt bored

and as though he was not able to express himself properly in his writing.

*Maurice* was born out of a trip in 1913 to the poet Edward Carpenter and his younger lover, George Merrill. They inspired Forster with the notion that perhaps it was possible for the love of two men to transcend societal expectations, to live alone together, content, and far from social conventions and restraints. This idea is translated to *Maurice*, as Maurice navigates same-sex relationships, personal denial, and the dangerous political climate, ending the novel with him and his lover Alec, able to love one another in a relationship which manages to overcome the personal and political obstacles of pre-war England. Throughout the novel, Forster's own struggle to come to terms with his sexuality and the contrast between his public and private self is evident in Maurice's character. When Maurice and Alec are granted the freedom to live out their love, to choose a life together and disappear into 'essential night', to 'live outside class', outside of structure and convention, Forster's own hopes are resonated and he's able to create an image and a situation for realising his happy ending.

Although Forster wrote the novel in 1914, he did not want to publish it as he felt society had not had adequate progression since the days of Wilde's conviction, and public attitudes had not shifted enough to appreciate the novel. Sadly, it seems that Forster questioned the artistic merit of much of his homosexually charged literature and he burned a lot of the material, dismissing it as a distraction from his other art. 24

He wrote on the cover of the 1960 typescript of *Maurice*, that he'd bequeathed to Isherwood: "Publishable – but worth it?". Regardless, it was published posthumously in 1971 and the initial response to Forster's gay literature was mixed, and, as he'd predicted, often negative. Many critiqued *Maurice* as a blight on Forster's literary record. It received a respectful but dispassionate audience. However, the era was not rich with queer art in the mainstream and, therefore, it's no surprise in retrospect that his work was not received as enthusiastically as his other, more conventional, literature. Had Forster published it in his lifetime, he would likely have encountered similar, if not more, resistance.

However, as society's attitudes, and laws, towards homosexuality have become more positive, E.M Forster's gay literature has gone from being anomalous to pioneering, from being ignored to being celebrated. In fact, Chris Smith, the first member of parliament to come out as gay publicly, spoke about the novel on BBC Radio 4. He advocated Forster's novel, saying it spoke to issues he'd encountered and struggles he'd faced as a gay man in a society which had, and in many ways still has not, adapted to support LGBTQ+ individuals. Smith referenced a specific moment in the novel when the question of whether homosexuality will ever be decriminalised arises. Maurice asks whether it will ever be so in England, and his hypnotist comments, "*England has always been disinclined to accept human nature.*"

*Maurice* represented, for Forster, a cathartic release of his own sexuality

and it's a shame that he was so ahead of his time in terms of his audience. His novel paved the way for an era rich in LGBTQ+ art, cinema and literature.

### **Bloomsbury Group LGBTQ+ history and legacy**

So, from their art and literature, to their progressive lifestyles, the Bloomsbury Group are undoubtedly positioned at the centre of Britain's LGBTQ+ history. From Virginia Woolf's genre-defying *Orlando* to E.M Forster's *Maurice*, the political, sexual and artistic frustrations that united and motivated the Bloomsbury artists to create is shown through their works. Whilst the fact that that the Bloomsbury Group were, in some part, protected from the plight of LGBT+ minorities by their wealth and class status is extremely important, the admirable intellectual, artistic and literary advancements made by the group are undeniable. The choices made by the individual members of the Bloomsbury Group to live, and to love, how they chose, contributed to the seismic shift in British attitudes towards LGBTQ+ rights and in literary and artistic advancements.



# Polari- Britain's Secret Gay Code

By Cate Coverley

## **What is Polari?**

Polari was a gay slang language most commonly used in the 1950s/60s, which has now mostly died out. During this period, homosexuality was still illegal in the UK, so a secret code was needed as it allowed people to have conversations in public places without risk of their sexuality being revealed. This form of language is known as 'argot', a way of speaking within a marginalised group that acts as protection from the outside. Polari wasn't fully a language and people wouldn't be able to hold long conversations in it like they would in English. It was a form of complex slang, mainly spoken, and it was constantly developing. Specific Polari words would be used within a normal sentence to disguise what speakers wouldn't want other people hearing, for example, one of the most common phrases, 'bona to vada your dolly old eek' meaning 'nice to see your pretty face'. Polari was mainly used by gay men but also by drag queens, lesbians and prostitutes. It wasn't as popular with women as during the time it would appear gay men and lesbians didn't mix that much, they would have had separate clubs for example.

## **Where did it originate from?**

Polari can be traced all the way back to the 16th century, where Cant Slang was used by criminals. Around this time

there also emerged a group of men named 'mollies', men who had sexual relations with each other. They would pick up the Cant slang these criminals used, as outcast groups would all surround each other in the underworld of London, and often would fall into jails together. Shakespeare himself used the Polari term 'bona' meaning good or attractive, in his play Henry IV Part 2. In the 18th and 19th centuries an Italian form of language, Parlaree, started to be used amongst travelling fairgrounds and circuses, markets, entertainers and beggars. These people would have been at the edge of society as they were always travelling around and not in one place. They would have stuck together and so the language would have developed amongst them. At the same time, cockney rhyming slang was developing in the underworld of London, where many people from the LGBTQ society would have been. Foreign languages would have also come off ships in the London docks, leading to different languages being mixed up around these areas. When these factors all came together Polari started to properly form. Polari hadn't always been associated with the LGBTQ community. It wasn't until the 1910s and 1920s it did, as drag queens started to use it in many of their performances. London was the home of Polari, it grew out of the entertainment industry in West End theatres.

### **Why was it used?**

In the 1950s, after the Second World War, the Government was determined to get back to a normal society.

Heteronormativity became even more enforced. It was also Queen Elizabeth's coronation in 1953, so London would be out on the spotlight. Laws and punishments became stricter to make London more presentable, leading to more arrests, blackmail and violence against the LGBTQ community. It was these conditions that helped Polari to flourish as it was even more of a necessity for people in the gay community to be able to communicate without getting noticed. It ended up bringing people within the community together, by slipping a few words of Polari into the conversation you would be able to tell if the person you were talking to was also gay depending on if they responded with Polari. The language itself was filled with irony, humour and sarcasm. Within the gay community it became a way to insult or humiliate others in front of each other.

### **Why did it die out?**

Now, Polari is unknown to most people and very few still use it. Some people are encouraging others to keep using it to stop it from being forgotten and dying out.

1) In 1967 homosexuality became legal so Polari wasn't needed like it was before, people in older generations may have still used it but it slowly stopped being passed on.



2) Some gay liberationists at the time started to view campness as problematic and stereotyping gay men which made Polari seem old fashioned and politically incorrect.

stereotyping gay men which made Polari seem old fashioned and politically incorrect.

3) The radio show 'Round the Hourne', featuring the characters Julian and Sandy, brought Polari into mainstream society and it was no longer something that could be used completely secretly.



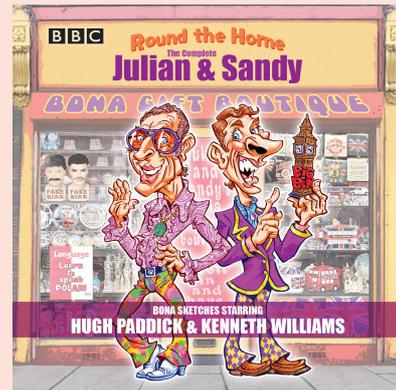
## Julian and Sandy

Polari became popularised in the radio show 'Round the Hourne' where Hugh Paddick and Kenneth Williams played Julian and Sandy, two camp homosexual characters. This was notable at the time considering homosexuality was still illegal, but they were also notable because they used Polari in their sketches. This meant only the gay audience members would understand some of the jokes, and straight members wouldn't be able to pick up on the double entendre being used, thinking they were just talking nonsense.

HORNE: Would I have vada'd any of them do you think?

SANDY: Oooh! He's got all the Polari, ain't he?

JULIAN: Hmmmm, I wonder where he picks it up?



Some words in mainstream language today have come from Polari such as 'Naff', 'Camp' and 'Butch'. These are some words that would have been used in Polari:

Bod body

Bold daring

Bonagood

ogles eyes

omi man

omi-polone effeminate man, or homosexual

onk nose

plate feet to fellate

polari chat, talk

polone woman

riah/riha hair

riah shusher hairdresser

cottaging having sex

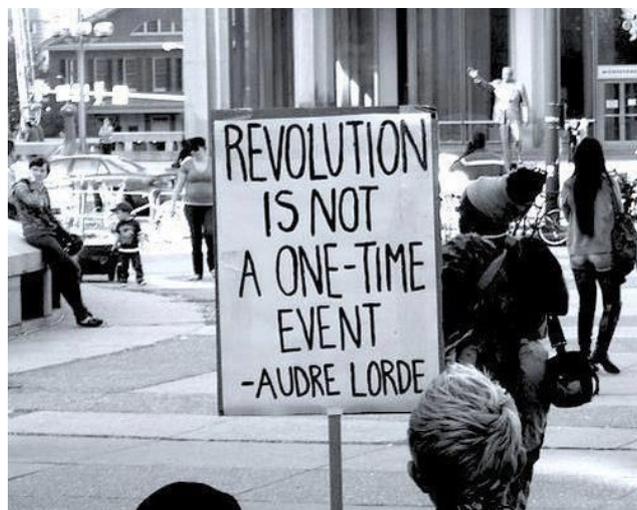
dish an attractive male

Many of these terms were sexual as this was what they were having to hide from people around them. Some words were simply flipped around from what they are in English, for example 'hair' is 'riah' and 'ecaf' is 'face'.

# *The power of Audre Lorde's legacy*

By Govhar Dadashova

When considering what to write for this term's issue, I found myself deeply interested in the works and life of Audre Lorde. For those, like myself, who know little about her, she was an acclaimed poet and essayist renowned for her opinions on race and lesbian feminism. Born on 18th February 1934 in New York, Lorde was the youngest of three girls. From an early age, with two West Indian immigrant parents in Harlem, she grappled with the complexity of her identity. She questioned the difference in treatment between herself and her light-skinned mother, whilst actively pushing the limited boundaries of sexuality. After penning her first poem in eighth grade, she soon discovered a medium of deep therapy. This would become particularly important following the death of her best friend Genevieve Thompson after high school, where she began to slowly move towards adulthood. Soon after, she became estranged from her family and was forced to finance her own education through Hunter College in 1954. Making money through any menial job she could find, Lorde worked in a variety of professions from a ghost-writer to an X-ray technician. During this period, she most notably moved from her childhood home of Harlem to Stamford. This signalled a deep shift in the burgeoning writer's life, as she began to explore her identity more fully. For example, during the year of 1954, she studied at the National University of Mexico. According to Lorde, it was here she began to properly realise her lesbian identity alongside her desire to pursue poetry. When she eventually returned to New York, she balanced her dreams whilst



making money working in libraries. By 1961, she earned a master's degree for library science at Columbia University, and soon after, married her later ex-husband Edwin Rollins.

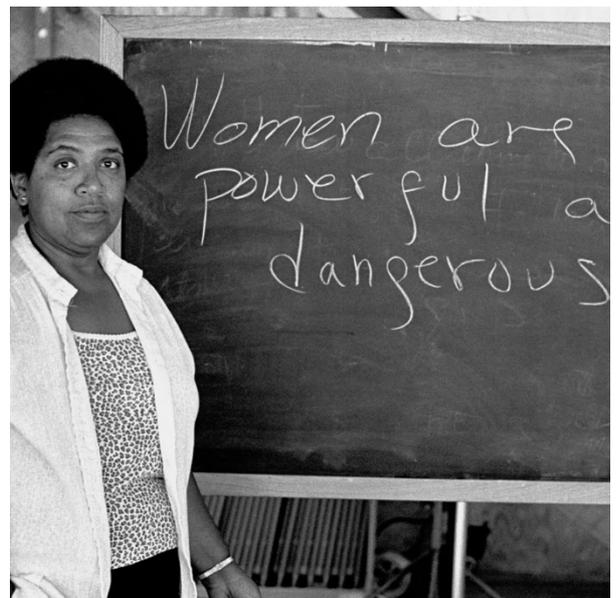
Lorde's career soon altered dramatically with the publication of 'First Cities' in 1968, her debut volume of poetry focused on themes like human love and betrayal. The poet continued to regularly publish volumes affected by her personal experiences. Her second volume was impacted by the deep racial violence of the South, which she had visited on her trip for a poetry workshop she held in Mississippi. She also included a poem called 'Martha' in this volume, which seemed to affirm her homosexuality. In addition, her third volume in 1973, called 'From a Land Where Other People Live', was her most successful yet. She was nominated for a National Book Award, and this propelled her critically acclaimed 'The Black Unicorn' in 1978. The latter delved more fully into her African heritage and inspired her more politicised works after.

***"It is not our differences that divide us. It is our inability to recognize, accept, and celebrate those differences."***

- Audre Lorde, *Our Dead Behind Us: Poems*

One of the most enduring tenets of Audre Lorde's legacy was how she championed greater equality within the feminist movement. Becoming part of the lesbian subset, which converged with growing activism for gay rights, she sought to tackle the singular perception of heterosexuality and the blind acceptance of male supremacy. For example, Lorde criticised notable works like Betty Friedan's 'The Feminine Mystique' for merely focusing on white middle-class experiences. The poet insisted that the movement ignored the complexity of intersection within identity, by focusing too heavily on pure binary opposition, and ignoring other factors like race. By 1989, concerns like hers would become verbalised in Kimberlee Crenshaw's intersectional feminism, which according to the law professor, was 'a prism for seeing the way in which various forms of inequality often operate together and exacerbate each other.' This highlights how Lorde's poetry allowed others to recognise the intricacy of privilege and how real change required a more balanced understanding of identity.

By the end of her life, the writer struggled with cancer for over a decade, penning her experiences in 'The Cancer Journals' of 1980. She spent her final years in the U.S. Virgin Islands, taking the African name of Gamba Adisa during this period. The name was translated to mean 'she who makes her meaning clear' and there couldn't have been a more perfect description of the writer's powerful impact. When she died in 1992, Lorde's writings continued to highlight the strength of identity, the resilience of its writer, and the need for bigger societal change.





*Know your rainbows*

## Rainbow diversity

By Florence Jarvis

In recent months, you will probably have noticed rainbows cropping up on our streets - peeking out of windows, adorning doors and even flying as flags in some cases. Started originally by a nurse in London, the trend of creating rainbow artwork to thank the NHS and keyworkers during the peak of the pandemic took hold of the nation and spread far and wide. The use of the rainbow provoked some backlash from the LGBTQ+ community, which was commonly met with the phrase “but no one owns the rainbow?” So, let’s turn to the question of what a rainbow is, and how many variations there are.

In the meteorological phenomenon of a rainbow we recognise seven colours: red, orange, yellow, green, blue, indigo and violet. But very rarely do we bother with the full 7 - it’s usually an either/or situation when it comes to indigo and violet, which has led to the six-striped rainbow that is most common.

Now to the pride flag. The original pride flag flew at the San Francisco Gay Freedom Day Parade on the 25th of June 1978. It was designed by Gilbert Baker, in association with Harvey Milk (an influential gay leader who was one of the first openly gay elected officials in the USA). The flag design was commissioned because the previous symbol for the LGBTQ+

community was a pink triangle. While reclaimed by some, this symbol represents a dark time in the community’s history - it was used by Nazis to identify and stigmatise homosexuals, about 15,000 of whom were incarcerated in concentration camps, where the death rate was as high as 60% (according to a leading scholar: Rüdiger Lautmann). Milk and others didn’t want to use this symbol anymore, and the creation of the pride flag was referred to by Artie Bressan (a friend of Baker’s) as hailing ‘a new dawn of gay consciousness and freedom’.

Crucially, the flag originally comprised eight stripes with symbolic meanings: hot pink (sex), red (life), orange (healing), yellow (sunlight), green (nature), turquoise (magic/art), indigo (serenity) and violet (spirit). After the assassination of Milk in November of the same year, demand for the flag increased greatly. Hot pink fabric was not widely available enough, so this stripe was scrapped in order to keep up. The next year (1979), the turquoise stripe was also removed. This was to ensure the flag had an even number of stripes, so could be split in two to decorate both sides of the 1969 parade route. The result was the six-stripe pride flag, hence the conflation between the ‘actual’ rainbow and the pride flag.

There are many other variations. Sometimes a black stripe is added, in honour of community members lost to AIDS. In March 2017, Baker himself added a 9th stripe to his original flag: a lavender stripe at the top to symbolise diversity (unfortunately this never really caught on). In June 2017, the city of Philadelphia added a brown and black stripe to the top of the six-stripe-flag to represent the intersection of race and sexuality and draw attention to the unique prejudices this intersection brings. In February 2018, some Brazilians celebrating Love Fest in São Paulo added a white stripe in the middle of the eight-stripe flag, which represented peace. Philadelphia altered the flag again in June 2018 by adding a chevron to the left-hand side, which incorporated the trans flag, a black stripe and a brown stripe to represent these marginalised communities within the LGBTQ+ community. Finally, at the Chennai Queer LitFest in India in July 2018, an alternative chevron was added which incorporated colours representing the socialist, self-respect and Ambedkarite movements.

I agree that no one could ever own the natural phenomenon of a seven-stripe rainbow. That belongs to Mother Nature, or whatever. But there is actually a lot of diversity to be found between rainbows - the queers 'own' some of them and I think that's fair enough.



## *'The gay plague' The AIDS epidemic in America*

By Fleur O'Reilly

The aids crisis began in the late 70s and by 1980 it is thought to have spread to five continents; North and South America, Europe, Africa and Oceania. AIDS was and still is considered by many to be a disease affecting gay people for their sins which led to little action to solve it. The AIDS epidemic is thought to have wiped out many of the gay communities. The epidemic is considered an event that shaped the LGBT community due to its political and social impacts.

The 60s and 70s had been a time of gay liberation sparked by the 1969 Stonewall riot and other similar uprisings. This led to increased backlash in the late 70s and 80s that coincided with the AIDS epidemic. Gay men suffered the most from AIDS deaths at the height of the epidemic. By 1995, in the USA, one in nine gay men had been diagnosed with AIDS, one in fifteen had died, and a whole 10% of the 1,600,000 men aged 24-44 who identified as gay had died. The epidemic decimated the cohort of gay men born 1951-70. Ronald Reagan had been elected president in 1981 until 1989 and represented the reenergised conservative movement in the USA which was hostile to the LGBT community. Many considered those with AIDS/HIV as 'immoral' and some even believed that the epidemic was gods rightful punishment to wipe out the community. This means that little was done to find a cure. Notoriously, Reagan avoided all public mention of AIDS until 1985. In 1983, Pat Buchanan wrote in the New

York Times, "The poor homosexuals, they have declared war on nature and now nature is exacting an awful retribution."

Since 1979-81 there had been rare typed of pneumonia, cancer and other illnesses found in male patients in Los Angeles and New York who had homosexual relations. Five young and previously healthy men in Los Angeles developed cases of a rare lung infection called Pneumocystis carinii pneumoni (PCP). That same year in New York and California there were reports of other young men with unusually aggressive cancer. By December there were more cases of PCP reported among people who injected drugs. There were 270 reported cases of severe immune deficiency among gay men with 121 of them having died at the end of 1981. In San Francisco, it is said that police officers wore mask and gloves 'to protect themselves from gay men'.

In 1982 further cases among gay men in southern California led to suggestions that the cause of the immune deficiency was sexual which led to it initially being called gay-related immune deficiency of GRID. By September, however, the CDC began to use the term acquired immune deficiency syndrome or AIDS. by now a number of AIDS organisations had been set up such as the San Francisco AIDS Foundation in the USA and the Terrence Higgins Trust in the UK. In 1983 cases of

AIDS were reported in children and women in heterosexual relations suggesting that it wasn't just for gay men. By this point, the CDC ruled out transmission by casual contact, food, water, air or surfaces. Despite this many would continue to alienate those who were part of the LGBT community believing they would be infected merely by contact. 1,292 people died of AIDS in the USA in one year. In 1984 bathhouses and private sex clubs were closed in San Francisco, New York and Los Angeles due to their high risk of transmitting the disease and the city's large number of gay communities.

In 1985 Ryan White, a teenager in Indiana, USA, was banned from returning to his school due to his diagnosis of AIDS in 1984. He was 13 at the time and contracted it through contaminated blood he used to treat his haemophilia. White filed a lawsuit against his school and became one of the first children in the US to be known publicly to have AIDS as at the time it was considered shameful and many hid having it. He was allowed to return to school the following year but on the day of his return 151 out of the 360 students at the school did not turn up. The following day a judge granted a restraining order to keep him out of school as people feared he'd infect the other children. The next autumn he was allowed back in school. He met numerous celebrities such as Michael Jackson and Elton John to help fight the stigma around AIDS before dying in 1990 at age 18.

It took until 1990 for the USA to enact the Americans with Disabilities Act which prohibited discriminating against those with disabilities including people with HIV. This was a milestone in the becoming much more impoverished. In 1991 Freddie Mercury, lead singer of Queen, died of AIDS one day after announcing to the

world that he had it. He became the LGBT community as beforehand many gay men had been discriminated against when hiring which led to the LGBT communities of AIDS. In 1991 a professional basketball player, Earvin Johnson, announced that he had HIV which helped deconstruct the stereotype of HIV as a 'gay' disease. Although Freddie Mercury's death brought wider understanding and recognition of AIDS, due to rumours of his gay activities, many were less sympathetic and many rumours began to spread about his lifestyle, blaming his death on nefarious activities.

1995 began to mark a change in the treatment of AIDS as it began to be able to be treated and kept at bay meaning it was no longer a death sentence but just a condition that would have to be dealt with the rest of their lives. By the end of the year, though, there were 4.7 million new cases of AIDS worldwide.

The epidemic in the western world primarily affected gay communities. AIDS deaths were highest in major cities with thriving gay communities with a far higher proportion of gay male residents than the national average. In 1990, AIDS caused 61% of all deaths of men aged 25-44 (born 1946-1965) in San Francisco, 35% in New York, 51% in Ft. Lauderdale, 32% in Boston, 33% in Washington, DC, 39% in Seattle, 34% in Dallas, 38% in Atlanta, 43% in Miami, and 25% in Portland, Oregon.

Over in the UK, Princess Diana helped the LGBT community as she broke down the stigma surrounding AIDS. In 1987 she opened Britain's first-ever AIDS ward at a London hospital which provided support to those living with the disease. The most significant thing she did though was shake the hand of a patient

without gloves, something even the nurses were afraid to do, on live TV. “HIV does not make people dangerous to know, so you can shake their hands and give them a hug,” she famously said at the Children and AIDS Conference in April 1991. “Heaven knows they need it”. A nurse, John O’Reilly, who was there, told the BBC that “If a royal was allowed to go and shake a patient’s hands, somebody at the bus stop or the supermarket could do the same, that really educated people”.

‘Baby boomer’ gay males have said that the AIDS epidemic is said to have the largest impact on their lives over any other LGBT event as it shaped their personal, social, psychological and community lives. The AIDS epidemic left the next generation without pre-existing communities and the open society that had been fought for in the 60s and 70s, but instead heightened discrimination and homophobia as well as a missing generation of mentors due to the epidemic.

“The poor homosexuals, they have declared war on nature and now nature is exacting an awful retribution.”

- New York Times, 1983



## Museums, exhibitions and more

### **Pleasure and prudence: a queer**

**Vauxhall treasure hunt** – Museum of London. Take a trip through the streets of Vauxhall on a digital treasure hunt and uncover the secrets of its queer and hedonistic past. 16+, 20th October- 6th March

### **Tantra enlightenment**

**to revolution-** British Museum. Explore the radical force that transformed the religious, cultural and political landscape of India and beyond in this landmark exhibition. 24<sup>th</sup> September- 24<sup>th</sup> January

### **Edmund de Waal-**

**library of exile-** British museum. Created as a 'space to sit and read and be', *library of exile* is an installation by British artist and writer, Edmund de Waal, housing more than 2,000 books in translation, written by exiled authors. 27 Aug- 12 Jan

Plus check out Queer Britain, a charity working to establish the UK's first national LGBTQ+ museum. a place as exciting as the people, stories and ideas it explores and celebrates.  
<https://queerbritain.org.uk>

### **Unfinished Business: The Fight for Women's Rights-**

British Library. From bodily autonomy and the right to education, to self-expression and protest, this new exhibition explores how feminist activism in the UK has its roots in the complex history of women's rights. 23rd October- 24th February

### **British Museum- Desire, Love, Identity: LGBTQ histories trail.**

<https://www.britishmuseum.org/visit/object-trails/desire-love-identity-lgbtq-histories>

### **Zanele Muholi** –Tate Modern.

Muholi describes themselves as a visual activist. From the early 2000s, they have documented and celebrated the lives of South Africa's black lesbian, gay, trans, queer and intersex communities. With over 260 photographs, this exhibition presents the full breadth of their career to date. 5th November- 7th March.

### **Dub London: Bassline of a city-**

Museum of London. An exciting new display celebrating dub reggae and its influence on the capital. From its roots in Jamaican reggae to how its shaped communities over the last 50 years, our new display explores not only dub music, but also the cultural and social impact it has had on the identity of London and its people. 2nd October- 31st January.

V&A LGBTQ collection



<https://www.standard.co.uk/go/london/lgbtq/where-london-lgbtq-queer-history-a4060761.html>

