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Rainbow Crossings: Gay Irish Migrants and LGBT Politics in 1980s London

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Abstract:

This article explores the involvement of Irish activists in the LGBT civil rights movement in 1980s London. At its core is a reconsideration of Mark Ashton, the charismatic figurehead of Lesbians and Gays Support the Miners (LGSM) as portrayed in the 2014 film Pride. Despite Ashton's Northern Irish background, very little attention has been paid to his Irishness: scholarship has tended to focus on the 1984-1985 British miners' strike instead. Here, I set Ashton alongside two other activists – Paud Hegarty, the manager of the Gay's the Word Bookshop, and the playwright Colm Ó Clúbhán – to suggest that the role of migrants in gay life and grassroots politics in London in the 1980s was not a coincidence but rather suggestive of the transnational character of the LGBT civil rights movement.

Keywords: Ireland, LGBT, London, Migration, Politics, 1980s

In January 1988, Margot Farnham, a researcher for the Hall-Carpenter Archives, interviewed several lesbians and gay men living in London capturing on tape their experiences growing up queer and how their lives had changed. Amongst those interviewed was Glenn McKee, a thirty-year-old from Downpatrick who had arrived in London in 1976 as a student (Farnham, Marshall 1989)[1]. "I wanted to come to London", he explained, "to come out as gay, and I deliberately planned it that way". McKee, later a clerk in the House of Commons, initially struggled to find a place in the burgeoning gay movement in London because of his disability – McKee had been born with Morquio syndrome. "I got the feeling", he told Farnham, "they couldn't cope". Going to clubs and bars was worse, "you could see rejection on everyone's face". It was a trip to Dublin in 1978 which shook McKee from his anxiety. Meeting other Irish people, who were themselves gay and lesbian, prompted

[1] The interview is contained in Farnham, Marshall (1989, 189-203). The original recording is held at the British Library, Hall-Carpenter Oral History Archive, C456/58.

him to rethink his life. "At the end of finals", he thought, "do [I] want to come back to Northern Ireland and go into the closet forever?. He answered himself in the negative and resolved not only to come out of the closet more forcefully, but never again to go back in" (192-193).

McKee's resolution led him to join the fledgling Gay's the Word bookshop in 1980, to join the Irish Gays in London (IGIL) group after its formation in 1981, the gay befriending group Icebreakers, and to participate in the national gay conferences in the Republic of Ireland in the early 1980s[2]. He also wrote (McKee 1979) for the *Gay Left* journal produced by the London-based Marxist-liberationist Gay Left Collective between 1975 and 1980. These activities, McKee reflected, not only gave him the gay friends for which he had yearned, they also taught him that Irish groups in the LGBT civil rights movement were, at the time, in his view (Farnham , Marshall 1989), "much more internationalist than British groups" such as the Campaign for Homosexual Equality (CHE). Members of IGIL certainly took a strong interest in what was going on in Northern Ireland: in 1981, together with the banner of the gay community in Brixton, the group's banner was carried on a Troops Out march through the centre of Belfast, and there were regular exchange and information meetings with activists from the principal Irish and Northern Irish LGBT civil rights groups including the Northern Ireland Gay Rights Association (NIGRA), the Irish Gay Rights Movement, and the National Gay Federation (since 2014 the National LGBT Federation)[3].

One of those Glenn McKee would have met, through his work at Gay's the Word and involvement in IGIL and Icebreakers, was Derry-born Patrick 'Paud' Hegarty (1955-2000). Having initially arrived in London as a zoology student at University College (UCL), Hegarty soon involved himself in the gay community in Brixton (including its short-lived radical newsletter *Gay Noise*), Icebreakers, IGIL, and joined Gay's the Word as a staff member in 1983[4]. During the 1984-1985 miners' strike, Hegarty provided space at the bookshop for meetings of Lesbians and Gays Support the Miners (LGSM), led by another Northern Irishman, Mark Ashton (1960-1987) of Portrush, and insisted on the right of that group's members to make bucket collections on the pavement outside the shop window. As one member, Colin Clews, recalled "the police had other ideas. Clearly unimpressed by a bunch of leftie poofs collecting for those subversive miners, they regularly threatened us with arrest if we didn't stop" (Clews 2017, 121). To avoid arrest, LGSM members would take refuge in the bookshop until the police had passed. Hegarty was himself no stranger to this dance of disobedience. In September 1980, for instance, he was one of six men arrested for "insulting behaviour" at a demonstration against the horror film *Cruising* starring Al Pacino, which activists alleged contained a homophobic message. Hegarty had given his male companion, Gareth Thomas, a goodbye kiss[5].

On the surface, the meeting of three gay men from different parts of Northern Ireland in a bookshop in central London in the early 1980s might be described as coincidental and of modest historical interest. This is not the case. Their meeting points to a little explored but significant aspect of gay life in Britain and Ireland between the partial decriminalisation of homosexuality in England and Wales in 1967 and decriminalisation in the Republic of Ireland in

[2] Both Icebreakers and IGIL met at Gay's the Word in this period. Some of their activities are discussed in the pages of the Gay's the Word *Newsletter*, which was first published in 1980. A small amount of archival material for IGIL, deposited by Glenn McKee, is held as part of the Hall-Carpenter Archives at the London School of Economics.

[3] *Outta Control* (1981).

[4] After a period of training at the Giovanni's Room bookstore in Philadelphia (Hermance 2014), Hegarty became manager of Gay's the Word in 1985 and remained in post until 1997.

[5] *Gay Noise* (1980).

1993[6]. Namely, the political and organisational role of migrants in the development of LGBT politics. As has increasingly been recognised by scholars, the LGBT civil rights movements which developed in Britain and Ireland in the 1960s and 1970s were sympathetic with each other and worked closely together to achieve their aim of legal reform and sexual equality. However, given the "methodological nationalism" of British and Irish LGBT historiography, fields of scholarship which have tended to react primarily to circumstances in their respective national contexts and in urban settings, the persistence of international and transnational dimensions has been neglected[7]. The present article offers one form of response – a series of linked biographies of individuals and institutions which emerged out of the gay Irish community in London in the 1980s.

Thus, at the core of what follows is a study of Mark Ashton, the Northern Irish communist and gay activist, who came to posthumous public attention following his portrayal by Ben Schnetzer in the 2014 film, *Pride*, together with institutional biographies of those organisations to which he was attached. The stress here is on each individual's Irishness – and especially a gay Irishness – as intersected by their experiences as migrants (and in McKee's case as a disabled person); as well as on the transnational character of the movements to which the activists were attached. Although much of the history of LGSM, for example, is now well understood, there has been far less commentary on its engagement with the Irishness of several of its core members – including Mark Aston. What did it mean to LGSM, for example, to hold a St Patrick's Day party, as they did at Ashton's flat in March 1985? What did it mean, also, that many of the organisations to which members were otherwise attached, including Switchboard and Gay's the Word, had similar Irish leanings? And to what extent did the presence of Irish activists in the LGBT movements in London in the 1980s prompt wider recognition and understanding in the British LGBT movement of the struggle for equality and civil rights across the island of Ireland?

1. Towards Transnational Queer/LGBT History

Given the alignment of gay history and the revisionist new queer history with national borders, existing historiography of LGBT experience in Britain and Ireland offers an imperfect guide to answering these questions. Gay migration has not been a major focus of study, except insofar as those living in rural and industrial areas moved to urban centres (such as London and Manchester) as part of a normative coming out process (Houlbrook 2005; Brown 2015; Brown, Browne 2016). Yet as Tomasz Sikora has rightly suggested, following the work of Andreas Wimmer and Nina Schiller Glick (2002), the "nationalization" of this past "may inadvertently risk a reterritorialization of the free transnational flow of queer ideas and may ultimately contribute to a 'homonationalization' of queerness" (Sikora 2014, 2). In the present context, ideas may be supplemented by people. The geographer Jon Binnie has suggested that region and therefore regionality can offer a counterweight to the national and to the metropolitan, by drawing "critical attention to important geographic differences in gender and sexual politics in regional contexts" (2016, 1631). Sympathetic findings can be found in borderlands studies, wherein the stress lies on the agency of those living in non-metropolitan communities (often in marginalised circumstances). As I have argued elsewhere (Howell, Leeworthy 2018), those living on the industrial or, for the periodisation of the present article, post-industrial frontier,

[6] Similar legislation was implemented in Scotland in 1980 and Northern Ireland in 1982.

[7] I am grateful to Dr Catherine Baker for pointing me towards "methodological nationalism". A useful overview of its application can be found in Chernilo (2011) and Sager (2016).

for instance, do not automatically absorb metropolitan culture in place of making their own – that is a "metropolitan fallacy". Instead there is a compromise: the result is a nuanced synthesis observable on its own terms without, as Cantú (2009) has noted, homogenising the cultural experience of the borderlands.

There is much to be gained from an engagement with the transnational turn in queer geography, wherein space and mobility better theorised and considered than in equivalent historical disciplines. In their work on feminism and transnational LGBTQ politics in Poland, Jon Binnie and Christian Klesse (2012) utilise the term 'transnational' in favour of 'global' or 'international' since it enables recognition of the fact that "many activists [are] mobile across national borders and orientate themselves to multiple locations in different states" (2012, 445). For instance: London and Dublin. As Glenn McKee explained to Margot Farnham, "I think a lot of Irish people here [in London] want to keep links with back home" (Farnham, Marshall 1989, 194). We may complicate this dual orientation still further, as do Binnie and Klesse, and as is appropriate when discussing Britain and Ireland in the twentieth century, with the insight of Jacqui Alexander and Chandra Mohanty (1997) who suggest that genuine transnational solidarity is possible only in such circumstances as activists reflect on postcolonial power relations. Such solidarities were (and are) not easily made or sustained, particularly in periods of social, cultural and political hostility, but represent an important convergence between hostility towards a racial/ethnic/religious minority and homophobia.

To be Irish in Britain in the 1970s and 1980s, was often to be viewed through a prevailing lens of suspicion, even if the likelihood of arrest or other personal disruption because of terrorism was minimal (Hickman, Walter 1997). Perpetuated by the media, sustained by the general public, and exacerbated by the Northern Ireland Troubles, this suspicion had its roots in much older racialised stereotyping of the Catholic 'Other' – the counter figure through which British identity was shaped (Sorohan 2012; MacRaild, 2013, Dawson, Dover, Hopkins 2017). And had been, as Linda Colley has famously argued, since the eighteenth century (1992). Thus for gay migrants from the island of Ireland, the question became an existential dilemma of whether to be a gay person in Ireland, when male homosexuality was still illegal, or be an Irish person in Britain. Such dilemmas have not been limited to the Anglo-Irish experience, of course. Without overstating the equation – given the specific othering of Muslims across the West since the 9/11 attacks in 2001 – there is a parallel in contemporary Islamophobic discourse which tends to construct Muslims as sexist and homophobic. In the ideological and discursive margins of a discourse of assimilation versus integration, gay Muslims face the dilemma of becoming, as Fatima El-Tayeb and others have discussed, "gays who cannot be properly gay" (Perez qtd. in El-Tayeb 2011, 88; El-Tayeb 2012; Baker 2016; Peumans 2017).

To fully appreciate the impact of migration and transnational solidarities on the LGBT movement in Britain and Ireland – at the local as well as the national level – and the dilemmas involved for migrants, then, it is necessary to step outside of the traditional national alignment of LGBT/queer historiography and to focus our attention instead on the world beneath. This does not necessarily mean abandoning the insights offered either by the politically-orientated and comparative work of foundational scholars such as Jeffrey Weeks (1977, 2007) or the social and cultural implications of human sexuality as a kaleidoscope of possibility which is the main thrust of contemporary queer history as pursued by Matt Houlbrook (2005) and others (Lewis 2013). Indeed, I have argued (Leeworthy 2019) in favour of a synthesis, and see no reason to set that synthesis aside. Yet, by problematising the nation, either through regionality or through marginality and migration, we can move beyond the metropolitan fallacy and recognise that which was common to gay experience regardless of origin and that which introduced a differ-

ential – be it age, race, gender, ethnicity, language, or religion (the list is by no means intended to be exhaustive). We can also recognise and reach an understanding of lines of solidarity and the transnational contexts in which the LGBT civil rights movement developed and operated. It was, after all, never entirely limited by national borders.

2. Contexts

Until the 1950s, the legal repression of male homosexuality was largely uniform across Britain and Ireland – with the prevailing legal statutes having been passed by the Westminster Parliament for the United Kingdom of Great Britain and Ireland in 1861 and 1885. Although independence in 1922 saw Irish statutes steadily diverge as a result of acts passed by the Oireachtas, there was no immediate attempt by any Irish administration to alter the legal proscription of male homosexuality – for better, or worse – although the Carrigan Committee on morality had recommended a stiffening of punishments in its 1931 report (Hug 1998). In fact, whereas the 1935 Criminal Law Amendment Act, the Dáil's legislative response to the Carrigan Committee's report, altered the (heterosexual) age of consent from sixteen to seventeen, its primary focus was on prostitution and the 'defilement' of young women (Finnane 2001; Smith 2004). Much the same situation prevailed in Northern Ireland, where the Northern Irish parliament, created in 1922 as a result of partition of the island of Ireland, likewise made no attempt to overturn or revise earlier statutes. It raised the age of consent in Northern Ireland from sixteen to seventeen in 1950, thereby creating uniformity across the island of Ireland, but a clear distinction with England and Wales, and Scotland, where the age of consent stood at sixteen[8].

The commonalities of proscription across Britain and Ireland began to break down after the Second World War, most notably with the publication (in the former) of the Wolfenden report on homosexuality and prostitution in 1957. In response, the first private member's bill to decriminalise homosexuality in England and Wales, albeit partially, was presented to the Westminster parliament in 1960. From the Liberal and Labour benches, there were already indications that, in the event of the Conservative government losing power, legislation would be passed which aimed at creating a more permissive society (Jenkins 1959; Bloch 1999). Dissent from the only Scottish representative on the Wolfenden Committee – James Adair – led to the exclusion of Scotland from reformist legislation in this period and Westminster generally did not intervene in Northern Irish affairs until the dissolution of the province's Parliament in 1972. This meant that when the Sexual Offences Act was passed in 1967, for the first time since 1885 proscription of homosexuality differed in England and Wales as compared with Scotland, Northern Ireland, and the Republic of Ireland. Liberalisation of English law, even on the relatively modest terms of the 1967 Act, encouraged a gay migrant's trail from the island of Ireland to major cities in England – most notably London. As the Northern Irish activist, and later Ulster Unionist politician, Jeffrey Dudgeon recalled,

> Most of the talent was literally on the point of departure, having a little courage to dabble locally just prior to fleeing to London, where the grass was reputedly greener and certainly more often cropped. (2008, 139)

[8] I have adopted, here, language which makes clear the distinction between the jurisdictions of England and Wales, on the one hand, and Scotland, on the other, rather than to describe them collectively as Britain. This better reflects the legal distinctions made possible in the late-twentieth century.

For those who did not leave Ireland, or who were on their way to the boat, Dublin offered a modest version of London's burgeoning lesbian and gay nightlife, and had done since the Victorian period, with pubs such as Bartley Dunne's and Rice's, both near St. Stephen's Green, a noted cruising area, clearly established as 'gay friendly' by the 1950s. It was, wrote the prominent Irish gay rights campaigner, David Norris, "a notorious haunt of the homosexual *demi-monde*" (2012, 79). However, it was not until 1979, with the opening of The Viking, that the Irish capital had its first openly gay bar[9]. The George, Dublin's second gay pub, opened in 1985. Such landmarks – of place as well as time – illustrated the lingering impress of an older generation on contemporary attitudes. In other words, the contextual connections between the 1950s and the 1970s are obvious – and were to the those who experienced them at close quarters.

It was a similar story in Belfast, a city with gay nightlife at least as old as that found in Dublin, which had various cruising spaces dotted around the city centre and the docks, and gay friendly pubs such as DuBarry's and the Royal Avenue (Leitch 1965; Dudgeon 2011)[10]. The outbreak of the Troubles at the end of the 1960s and the imposition of a curfew in the city centre meant that owners of pubs, clubs, and hotels took a more relaxed attitude – famously, if somewhat exaggeratedly, the only people likely to be in Belfast city centre at night in this period were British soldiers and gay men cruising for sex. The curfew also encouraged Belfast's emerging punk scene, for instance (Duggan 2010; Duggan 2012). Out of this more relaxed attitude – and economic need – came the city's first gay-run venue, the Chariot Rooms, run by Ernie Thompson and Jim Kempson. It was a similar story of accessibility in other parts of Northern Ireland. By the late-1970s, *Gay News* was advertising several hotel bars outside of Belfast known to be 'gay friendly' or where the newspaper was itself on sale. These included the Park Tavern, Balmoral Bar, the Northern Counties Hotel, and the Country Club, all of which were in Portrush; the Bodega in Portadown; and the Gluepot in Derry[11].

Most post-war emigration from the island of Ireland, regardless of sexuality, was prompted by economic circumstance, of course, but gay men and women also undoubtedly felt the impact of a repressive system of social silence, antipathy, and state censorship of information (Ryan-Flood 2015), particularly in the Republic. The steady emergence of sociological study and memoir in Britain in the 1950s, for example, was met with a wall of censorship. Michael Schofield's pioneering research study, *Society and the Homosexual* (1952), Donald Cory's *The Homosexual Outlook* (1953) and Peter Wildeblood's *Against the Law* (1955) were all banned, as was the latter's sequel *A Way of Life* (1956). To ensure the complete absence from Ireland of Wildebood's memoir, in which he declared that "I am a homosexual" and which was part of the cultural environment leading to the Wolfenden proposals, the Irish censors also banned the 1957 paperback edition. Literature, whether from the United States, such as Gore Vidal's *The City and the Pillar* (1949) or James Baldwin's *Giovanni's Room* (1957), or from Northern Ireland, notably Maurice Leitch's 1965 novel, *The Liberty Lad*, with its overt discussion of gay life in Belfast, was outlawed[12]. Film and television were both subject to notable state interven-

[9] The Irish Gay Rights Movement opened the Phoenix Club on Parnell Square in 1976 which was the first gay community centre in the Republic of Ireland. It hosted discos, a telephone befriending service (Tel-A-Friend), and meeting spaces for Dublin's gay and lesbian community; see Patrick McDonagh 2017.

[10] Tom Hulme's forthcoming work on the queer history of Belfast in the early part of the twentieth century will advance our understanding considerably. My thanks to Tom for several discussions on this theme.

[11] This is based on a reading of the 'gay guide' published in *Gay News* from 1972 onwards, venues outside Belfast begin to be mentioned in 1974.

[12] I have based the detail in the present paragraph on a reading of the library catalogue of Trinity College Dublin, which provides annotation where a book was placed on the banned list.

tion, with local authorities in Northern Ireland often intervening to prevent the showing of films passed by the film censors in London (Barber 2016).

3. Writing the Gay Dilemma

For young gay Irishmen, then, London may have seemed like nirvana compared with circumstances at home, but it was by no means a hotspot of liberty and free expression. This duality of expectation and reality can be understood readily from the contribution to the pamphlet *Out For Ourselves* (Boyd 1986) made by the dramatist and poet Colm Ó Clúbhán (Colm Clifford), who left Ireland for London in 1973. At first, he wrote, he felt free in London and free to be openly gay, but he soon encountered prejudice from all sides. Towards the end of 1978, *Gay Left*, the magazine of the Gay Left Collective, published an article by the Northern Irish activist Jeffrey Dudgeon – the first in its pages to deal with Ireland. Adopting a stridently unionist position, Dudgeon argued that in the North radical feminism (and by extension gay liberation) was "gaining strength partly as radicalism abandons the dead-end of Republicanism" and that "direct rule [from London] has been a liberating experience in many ways". He concluded, with a knowing nod to circumstances in the Republic, that "rampant nationalism is literally the death knell for gay liberation" (Dudgeon 1978, 30). It was a controversial statement and for readers such as Ó Clúbhán seemed entirely predicated on the assumption that the perfect solution for the LGBT community in Ireland was to "re-join the union" (Boyd 1986, 91).

For Ó Clúbhán and others of the diaspora living in London, Dudgeon's overture took a slightly different turn, evolving into the central dilemma of whether to be a gay person in Ireland or an Irish person in England, or to reject the binary entirely. "I was gay", Ó Clúbhán wrote, "and Irish society was what I'd spent nineteen years hovering on the edge of […]. The idea of having to face all that again was too much" (Boyd 1986, 92). He said much the same to *Out*, the Dublin-based gay youth magazine, in 1985: "I can list forever the oppression of Irish people living in England, yet I cannot live in Ireland" (*ibidem*). To escape both, Ó Clúbhán fled to Barcelona, where he lived for a period before returning to London – he remained there for the rest of his life. "I linger on", he reflected of his life in the latter, "because it's the place I've learned to survive in" (*ibidem*). But the tensions which had prompted him to leave and try his luck in post-Franco Catalonia had little dissipated on his return:

> Once the glamour of having more than one bar and gay centre to choose from wears off, there is the reality of having to survive in a foreign country. And not just any foreign country, but England. (*Ibidem*)

Responding to his situation and keen to explore his gay Irishness, Ó Clúbhán began writing short stories, poems, and eventually plays (Madden 2018). There were book reviews for *Gay Left*, too, acting in much of the drama presented by the Brixton Faeries (which he had helped to establish), and close involvement in the filming of *Nighthawks* – Ron Peck's landmark 1979 study of gay life in contemporary London (Cook 2014)[13]. At that time, Ó Clúbhán was a 'stalwart' of the Brixton gay squats in Railton Road, and the scenes which he filmed depicted the successful pick up of the film's central character, Jim, a gay teacher played by Ken Robertson. The two then returned to the squats. As Cook notes, these scenes "represented something more

[13] The theatrical work of the Brixton Faeries is documented in the papers of Ian Townson, which are held as part of the Hall-Carpenter Archive at the LSE – HCA/TOWNSON. The collection also includes several photographs of Colm Ó Clúbhán.

challenging […] they [the squatters] paid much less attention to passing as straight" (2011, 106). Although cut from the final print of *Nighthawks*, Ó Clúbhán's contribution was included in Peck's 1991 film, *Strip Jack Naked*, as a posthumous tribute following the actor's death from an AIDS-related illness in 1989. Without the squats, the cultural and political milieu of South London Gay Liberation would not have been as vibrant or as long-lasting, and without them it also seems unlikely that Ó Clúbhán would have moved into agit-prop theatre as a means of expressing his Irishness, his gayness, and his gay Irishness.

The Brixton Faeries, which included another Northern Irish emigré, Terry Stewart, came together in 1975 with the intention of putting on a piece of agit-prop street theatre at that year's Gay Pride festival[14]. The performance was titled *Mr Punch's Nuclear Family* and was a skit on the classic Punch and Judy puppet shows of the Victorian and Edwardian period. It ended with the slaughter of the liberally-minded Judy and the couple's gay son, Sonny, by the conservative and patriarchal Mr Punch. Other figures in the performance included John Bull and Britannia – their presence was intended to make an anti-capitalist statement alongside the commentary about sexism and homophobia. The play was first performed at the Gay Community Centre in Railton Road. A subsequent, albeit edited performance took place in the playground of the nearby Effra Parade Primary School. Subsequent plays included *Tomorrow's Too Late* in 1977, a reply to the banning of *Gay News* from the newsagent and bookseller W. H. Smith; *Minehead Revisited* created in in 1979 in response to the Jeremy Thorpe trial and the lurid presentations of homosexuality which emerged as a result. The last major production by the Faeries which Ó Clúbhán was involved with was *Gents* from 1980, a celebratory look at the life of gay men which was set in a public lavatory and was intended to explain the reasons for cruising and cottaging.

Following the dissolution of the Brixton Faeries theatre group in the early 1980s, Ó Clúbhán moved into radical theatre of a different kind signalled most directly in the plays he wrote for the Irish Gay Theatre Group in the mid-1980s: *Friends of Rio Rita's* in 1985 and *Reasons for Staying* in 1986[15]. Both starred Jim MacSweeney, who had come to London from Cork in 1982 to study drama. As he explained to the Cork *Echo*, "I was young, free and single […] going to the theatre, dancing, living in bedsit land, squatting in flats"[16]. In 1989, having got the acting bug out of his system, MacSweeney began working at Gay's the Word bookshop, taking over from Paud Hegarty as manager in 1997. Given their origins, the two plays written for and performed by the Irish Gay Theatre Group were endowed with a clear sense of queer Irishness and the dilemmas that being both gay and Irish and an emigrant involved: the latter play included a discussion of the Declan Flynn murder in Dublin in 1982, posing the question of, as Ed Madden notes (quoting from the play script), what it meant to be Irish and gay at that time:

> Ask Cormac what happens to queers in that sweet mist-bedecked country where the uileann pipes cut a note through the lark infested clear air. (2015, 108)

[14] Stewart had left Belfast for London in 1975. He was involved in the Troops Out Movement and lived in the Brixton squats.

[15] A third play, *The Rip in the World*, was performed at the Theatre Centre in London, on 7 November 1987. This, however, was separate from the work for the Irish Gay Theatre Group and dealt with themes of child abuse and children's homes; see Norma Cohen 1987, 31. Ó Clúbhán was introduced to the Theatre Centre by Noel Greig (1944-2009).

[16] *The Echo* (Cork), 24 June 2019.

The early performances of *Reasons for Staying* were staged during Irish cultural festivals such as Feile Na nGael in January 1986 and the event organised by Battersea and Wandsworth Irish Group at the Battersea Arts Centre in March 1986 before transferring to the famous Oval House Theatre[17].

Perhaps more so than *Reasons for Staying*, *Friends of Rio Rita's*, Ó Clúbhán's first play for the Irish Theatre Group, had very clear autobiographical elements, and examined the experiences of two men – Finbarr and Mick – who had left Ireland (in part) to escape persecution for their sexuality but who found their lives in London bound up with the British reaction to the Troubles and rising anti-Irish hatred[18]. As the play's poster, put it:

> Being gay and Irish in London; as gay men we are outside the Irish community and as Irish men what has the gay sub-culture to offer us? We explore while the unacknowledged war goes on. (Ó Clúbhán 1985)

The title leant on Brendan Behan's character of the same name from his 1958 play *The Hostage*, and, Ó Clúbhán explained to *Out* magazine in 1985, was intended to be an Irish twist on the gay-identifying, American phrase "friends of Dorothy". Although there was undoubtedly a secondary twist: The Oval House had opened as a theatre in April 1930 with a staging of the musical *Rio Rita*. In the course of the later play, as Madden (2018) suggests, Ó Clúbhán invited audiences to consider which identity was to be the more fundamental: a politicised Irishness guided by an active response to the Troubles and to racism, or a gay Irishness which seemed to lack a radical framework. Publicity photographs showed a moustachioed Ó Clúbhán sat on a bench alongside the fresh-faced MacSweeney, the former reading a copy of the Sinn Fein weekly newspaper *An Phoblacht*, the latter a copy of the London LGBT newspaper *Capital Gay*. Neither paper seemingly at all aware of the other – the ideal metaphor for the gay Irish migrant's dilemma.

4. A Good Gay Defence Organisation

It was into this already well-established, albeit complex and nuanced world of gay liberation, Irish activism, and gay Irishness, that Mark Ashton stepped on his own arrival in London in 1978. Popular perceptions of Ashton have largely been shaped by the hit film *Pride* (2014) and his involvement in the featured activist group Lesbians and Gays Support the Miners (LGSM). Indeed, he has emerged as a latter-day hero, venerated in memorials across Europe from Onllwyn to London and Paris. Yet there has been almost no attention given to Ashton's Irishness or to his relationship with the gay Irish milieu in 1980s London. The film, in fact, attenuated Ashton's links to Northern Ireland, with just one line of dialogue in the script referring to the character's origins. This is unfortunate but by no means unexpected, reflecting the easier transition of many migrants – including Ashton and Ó Clúbhán – into the gay community than into the diasporic one. Historians have similarly overlooked Ashton's Irishness, focusing their attention instead on the convergences between class solidarities, leftist politics (Ashton's communism was similarly left out of the film) and the links between the members of LGSM and women in the South Wales Coalfield (Robinson 2007a; Kelliher 2014; Leeworthy 2016; Robinson 2019).

[17] *The Stage* (London), 24 April 1986; for earlier performances see: *The Stage*, 22 August 1985, 28 November 1985.

[18] In the original staging, Finbarr was played by Ó Clúbhán, Mick by MacSweeney.

But what ought to be made of Mark Ashton's Northern Irish background? Born in Oldham, near Manchester, in May 1960, Ashton grew up in the small, seaside town of Portrush, County Antrim. Largely overshadowed by the nearby university town of Coleraine, Portrush had the typical character of a seaside resort: relatively busy during the summer, quieter during the winter months when facilities aimed at tourists shut down or shifted to serve the student population. Yet this was hardly a sleepy provincial community. In fact, students introduced into the area topics and ideas which would perhaps not otherwise have reached the northern coast of Ireland in the early 1970s except as newspaper tittle-tattle: not least women's liberation and gay liberation. In 1972, students in Coleraine and in Derry, some thirty miles to the south-west, established branches of the Sexual Liberation Movement (SLM) – the local equivalent of Belfast's Gay Liberation Society which had emerged in 1971, or London's Gay Liberation Front of October 1970[19]. In the autumn of 1973, Coleraine hosted Ireland's first conference on sexual freedom (McDonagh 2019). And, as noted earlier, towns such as Portrush began to develop gay-friendly bars by the mid-1970s – as did the city of Derry.

Mark Ashton was, of course, still in school when the conferences and gay rights groups came into being in the mid-1970s, but they were well-established by the time he began studying at the Northern Ireland Hotel and Catering College in Coleraine in about 1976. Although it is not clear the extent to which he was aware of, or, indeed, engaged with the gay civil rights movement before he left Portrush for London, or whether he was aware of the gay friendly bars in his home town, but they were there all the same[20]. Ashton left Northern Ireland when he was eighteen, arriving in a London which was seemingly far away from the virulent homophobic of Ian Paisley's Save Ulster from Sodomy campaign and from the street thuggery of the Democratic Unionist Party, which, even after partial decriminalisation of homosexuality in Northern Ireland in 1982, continue to harass and target gay rights meetings[21]. London was far away, too, from the worst of the violence of the Troubles. But, having grown up in their midst, Ashton could hardly forget the Troubles or, in his more politically radical phase in the mid-1980s, the impact of aspects of Northern Irish life that had so marked his childhood, such as hostile policing. As he put it in the credit sequence of *Framed Youth*, the pioneering film produced in 1983 by the London Lesbian and Gay Youth Project, the police were not necessarily what the popular imagination thought them to be:

> I used to be very naïve. I used to think, you know, here's our boys in blue who are coming along to save us from being mugged in the streets and protect [us] from being burgled. I came down with a bang very quickly. I realised that the police were not actually your friendly little bobby on the beat, at all, in fact they were very dangerous people. Frightening people. I am very frightened of the police. Not because I've done anything wrong, but because they actually convinced me I am doing something wrong when I know for a fact I'm not.

Such an observation might well be a reflection on the Royal Ulster Constabulary in Northern Ireland as much as on the Metropolitan Police in London – although neither force is directly named.

Other comments Ashton made on film in this period can similarly be connected, it seems to me, not only to the convergence between class and sexuality, but also to his Northern Irish

[19] *Belfast Telegraph*, 6 April 1974.

[20] One close friend at the time later recalled that "the two of us began the process of coming out, first to each other, then our friends" (*Coleraine Times*, 10 September 2014). This pre-dated their mutual departure for London in 1978.

[21] *Belfast Telegraph*, 3 July 1979; 22 October 1983.

roots[22]. In *All Out: Dancing in Dulais*, the memorial film made in 1985 by members of LGSM who had previously been involved in the Lesbian and Gay Youth Film Project, Ashton reflected on the need for a "good defence organisation":

> We've got a gay community, we need a good gay defence organisation – that's what CHE [the Campaign for Homosexual Equality] should be. The miners and workers in general need defence organisations, and that's what unions are. And what this strike is about, is about smashing those defence organisations and smashing their unions. And I'm not going to stand up for that because you start on that and there's no stopping it.

Although it was unsaid, here, at least, Ashton undoubtedly had a variation of this statement involving the Troubles – in fact, one of the various subgroups within the Communist Party of Great Britain in the mid-1980s, which was somewhat hostile to Ashton's Eurocommunist politics, recorded him as having been "thoroughly contemptuous of [an] anti-republican stance and opposition to the armed struggle"[23]. It is equally possible that Ashton's position on the Northern Ireland question shaped LGSM's response as a whole. Early in its existence, LGSM received a letter from the Northern Ireland Gay Rights Association (NIGRA) asking to affiliate and offering an individual membership fee in the name of Tim Bishop[24]. At the end of September 1984, members of LGSM discussed this request at their fortnightly meeting but ultimately rejected it on the basis that they were a London support group and that the best mechanism for NIGRA to support the miners' strike was through the Irish Congress of Trade Unions (ICTU), based in Dublin. The membership fee, which NIGRA had already sent, was returned[25]. What was perhaps unknown to LGSM at that stage was that the ICTU, and the public sector union SIPTU, in particular, was itself providing financial support to South Wales – much of SIPTU's funding, ironically, went to the Neath, Dulais, and Swansea Valleys Miners' Support Group just like LGSM's donations[26].

Although affiliation from NIGRA was rebuffed, Irish and Northern Irish members of LGSM did find themselves connecting their Irishness and their support for the miners all the same – the group did provide a message of solidarity when the Dublin Lesbian and Gay Solidarity group was formed just before Christmas 1984 and a warm welcome to visitors from the group in the spring of 1985[27]. The Dublin LGBT community's first act was to send money to the miners via LGSM. On their trip to Onllwyn in October 1984, LGSM were taken to various sites including to the nearby village of Banwen, reputed birthplace of the patron saint of Ireland, St. Patrick. That trip then provided the inspiration for a fundraising event in March 1985: a St. Patrick's Day meal held at Ashton's flat in London. The idea had also been his. As the minutes recorded, "Mark suggested a St Patrick's Day lunch for the miners (said saint being born in Dulais valley!)"[28]. A céile was subsequently added to the proceedings. The surviving

[22] Note, for instance, his attempts to build links between the Communist Party and the Lesbian and Gay Christian Movement (Hall-Carpenter Archive, London School of Economics, HCA/LGCM/7/50/Folder 2).

[23] *The Leninist*, 20 March 1987.

[24] LGSM Minutes, 9 September 1984.

[25] LGSM Minutes, 23 September 1984.

[26] The links between SIPTU and the support group based in Onllwyn were fostered by Hywel Francis and Ally Thomas, from Wales, and Francis Devine in Ireland. Francis and Devine knew each other through their mutual work on labour history. My thanks to Hywel for discussing these links with me.

[27] LGSM Minutes, 2 December 1984; 31 March 1985. In the former meeting, "the group expressed its gratitude to comrades in Dublin for such a fine gesture of international lesbian and gay solidarity".

[28] LGSM Minutes, 10 March 1985.

flyer, now held as part of the LGSM records at the People's History Museum in Manchester, was full of typical imagery: tricolour, harp, and shamrock. It read: "Irish members of LGSM invite you". By implication, this indicates that Mark Ashton was not the only Irish member of LGSM, although he was the most prominent and influential – there were, in fact, several from different parts of the island, north and south.

Robert 'Monty' Montgomery, a cycling enthusiast and one of those responsible for LGSM's sponsored ride from London to Onllwyn over Easter 1985, joined LGSM in August 1984 but was an old friend of Ashton's from Northern Ireland. The pair had studied together at catering college in Coleraine and embraced the emerging punk scene.[29] This led them towards the clubs and bars in Derry, where they got to know the members of the punk group, The Undertones. A photograph in Michael Bradley's memoir, *Teenage Kicks* (2016), for example, shows Montgomery and Ashton together with the band in a back lane off Lisburn Road in Derry in 1978. That was the year the band recorded their most famous track at the Wizard Studios in Belfast, with funding from the BBC Radio DJ John Peel – who held 'Teenage Kicks' to be his all-time favourite song. It was also the year that, having completed college, 'Mark and I jumped on the first boat out of Northern Ireland, set sail for Liverpool and ended up in London'.[30] Whilst living in London, Montgomery did become involved in political activity, alongside Ashton, and in addition to LGSM, but on a much smaller scale: Montgomery later left London for Australia.

Reggie Blennerhassett, on the other hand, who can be seen in *All Out: Dancing in Dulais* reflecting on the impact of LGSM's work and the, in his words, "super" visit to Onllwyn, was born in Sligo in the west of Ireland. As he explained in oral testimony recorded in 1987, he knew that he was gay from a young age. Moving from Sligo to Dublin, where he studied at the College of Commerce in Rathmines, Blennerhassett nevertheless remained in the closet until he emigrated to London in 1982. As he later put it, he left "basically because I was gay and the thought of another four years in Ireland filled me with despair" (Tierney 2015). Soon he found himself working in a pub and, as he recalled in 1987, had his first affair with another man not long afterwards – the man was an American he met in Soho. Blennerhassett was another who joined LGSM after its formation in July 1984 – he did so, with his partner Ray Aller, in September 1984 after meeting Mark Ashton at a pub in central London[31]. In the aftermath of the strike, Blennerhassett worked as finance officer at the London Lesbian and Gay Centre: "it was the early 80s, I'd just moved from Ireland, and I thought it was amazing", he explained in 2016[32].

In a real sense, these young men were living the patterns of life that Colm Ó Clúbhán was writing about in his drama, embracing a queer way of being – and of being Irish – that was impossible at home. For Ashton, this involved drag. For a time, as his friend Richard Coles (2014) recalled, he was employed as a barman at the King's Cross Conservative Club – although Ashton turned up for work in full drag. A look complete with polka-dot skirts and a Lily Savage-style blonde beehive wig. Robert Montgomery similarly recalled that

> Mark hung out with people like Boy George, Marilyn, Phillip Salon, he frequently cross-dressed, living as a woman for about six months when we shared a flat on Ladbroke Grove. He never left the house unless he was in full drag, and he was totally convincing. Morning ritual was getting out of bed,

[29] *Coleraine Times*, 10 September 2014.

[30] *Ibidem*.

[31] Blennerhassett's experiences were recorded as part of the Hall-Carpenter oral history project in 1987 (British Library, C456/57).

[32] Christobel Hastings 2016.

consulting his book of Hollywood glamour portraits and choosing a look for the day. He had his eyebrows shaved off and would with the quick flick of an eyebrow pencil have the look.[33]

But, as in *Friends of Rio Rita's*, politics began to intervene. Prompted in part by a visit to Bangladesh in 1982, but no less by bouts of unemployment, Ashton became the activist made famous by cinema. In addition to LGSM, Ashton was active in the Campaign for Nuclear Disarmament (CND)'s gay section, the Young Communist League, the Communist Party of Great Britain (CPGB), the anti-apartheid movement, and the protests against Ronald Reagan's visit in June 1984 (as part of the G7 Summit). The list is not itself exhaustive, but as one obituary recorded Ashton "was always to be found in any of the gay contingents which took part in the large marches and mobilisations [...]. He took part in all the early battles between the printers and the Murdochs and Shahs of this world, and from Warrington to Wapping he was always there"[34]. This meant mixing with a variety of leftists, with as many different ideological and theoretical positions as could be managed. Even a formal political party such as the CPGB was riven with competing factions. Outside of the CPGB's Eurocommunist and Stalinist (or 'tankie') tendencies, there was a leftist spectrum containing the International Marxist Group, Militant, the Spartacists, the Socialist Workers' Party, the Workers' Revolutionary Party, and the Revolutionary Communist Party – most of them known by an alphabet soup of three letter acronyms.

On their own terms these groups could dominate an activist's life and political outlook, but they were all minor (to say the least) in comparison to the mainstream Labour Party and often more obsessed with theoretical righteousness than winning support from the wider public. In an obituary of Ashton published in March 1987, for example, one hard-line faction within the CPGB complained that he was "a political opponent and was hostile to Leninism" and that LGSM had been "limited because it was not under disciplined, ideologically correct and clear sighted communist leadership"[35]. Ashton was seen by the hardliners as an opponent precisely because he had sided with the reformist, Eurocommunist group, with its ideas of cross-community alliances, rather than because he was a member of an organisation or party outside of the CPGB. LGSM itself mirrored and reflected the diverse range of opinions on the left and included communists like Mark, members of the Socialist Workers' Party, Militant, Labour Party activists (often from the Labour Campaign for Lesbian and Gay Rights), and those who were unaligned but otherwise politically motivated and interested. This coalition was always fragile and one of the striking aspects of LGSM's work was the fact that many of the potential divisions were kept to one side for so long.

In fact, whilst the strike was on-going, the diverse politics underpinning and represented in LGSM tended not to be outwardly expressed – at least until the end of 1984 – although they clearly impacted upon the internal discussions the group had each week. It was at that point, the strike entering into its ninth month, that Lesbians Against Pit Closures (LAPC) was formed[36]. As Nicola Field recalled, the internal environment, which was dominated by men, had much to do with the decision to break away, although it was initially reasoned as a means of increasing representation of women and fundraising in women-only venues. "I saw men tearing into each other remorselessly on points of political theory at meetings. I could see that it was a very

[33] *Coleraine Times*, 10 September 2014.
[34] *Capital Gay*, March 1987.
[35] *The Leninist*, 20 March 1987.
[36] LGSM Minutes, 16 December 1984.

unforgiving environment and you would have to be completely unaligned and rise above it to cope with being there" (Tate 2017). LAPC redirected their support towards a different mining community and a different coalfield – Nottinghamshire – thereby setting out a separate identity. For all the distinction, however, and the presented hostility in the 2014 film *Pride*, the two groups did work together and often carried their banners side-by-side at rallies and marches.

Only as the miners' strike came to an end, in March 1985, and minds turned towards the aftermath and to the consequences of a year-long industrial dispute, did LGSM begin to engage directly with wider political themes. This engagement was apparent in their involvement with the London-Wales Congress in Support of Mining Communities and LGSM's own self-organised conference. The former was intended as a continuation of the lines of solidarity which had been developed between LGSM and the South Wales NUM; the latter reflected more clearly LGSM's own internal political debate. Held in 1985, the conference included workshops on anti-imperialism, Ireland, and HIV/AIDS, and featured a performance, at the London Lesbian and Gay Centre, of Stephen Gee and Nigel Young's 1982 drama, *Shoot*, which was itself about the experiences of gay men in Ireland[37]. The performance – in practice, a 'rehearsed reading'[38] – provided a direct connection back to the Brixton Faeries, with which Gee was involved as an actor, musician, and director. Given the play's themes, it was also part of the wider representation of Ireland and Irish alienation by gay theatre in London in this period. Unfortunately, the workshops themselves were not documented and no further detail appears in LGSM's own archival records held in Manchester[39].

5. Beyond LGSM

One of those for whom LGSM was a constant but equally tangential presence between 1984 and 1985 was Paud Hegarty, the assistant manager and then manager of Gay's the Word, where the group met between September and October 1984. The group collected money outside the bookshop, however, throughout the strike. Hegarty did not join LGSM, in the sense of attending its meetings, but was protective of the rights of group members to collect outside the bookshop and quarrelled with the police when they threatened to arrest those rattling buckets (Clews 2017). In the second half of the 1980s, then a member of the Communist Party, Hegarty wrote for *Marxism Today*, the theoretical journal of the Eurocommunists, contributing articles on HIV/AIDS (Hegarty 1986) and book reviews (Hegarty 1988) on novels such as Alan Hollinghurst's 1987 breakthrough *The Swimming Pool Library*. As bookshop manager in this period, he was likewise often called upon to give talks about the aims and objectives of a specialist LGBT bookshop and the hostile environment which had led to the Defend Gay's the Word campaign[40]. And in 1989, he joined a range of voices including the director Derek Jarman, drag artist Lily Savage, and singer Jimmy Somerville, in signing the "Our Right to Speak" manifesto – a response to the libel action launched by the *New Statesman* against the *Pink Paper*[41].

[37] The play had previously been performed at the Oval House Theatre in June 1982. Young was an active member of LGSM and Gee, a journalist for *Capital Gay*, who had grown up in a mining community himself, was a sympathetic observer.

[38] LGSM Minutes, 3 March 1985.

[39] Although it seems probable that there was some overlap, at least in Mark Ashton's contributions, with the work of the Communist Party and the Young Communist League. For instance: Hall-Carpenter Archive, London School of Economics, HCA/LGCM/5/43.

[40] *Kensington News*, 25 February 1988.

[41] *New York Native*, 20 May 1991.

The antagonism between the *Pink Paper* and the *New Statesman* had its origins in an article published in the latter in September 1989. Its theme was ostensibly an attack on what the journal regarded as "an intense and damaging campaign against orthodox treatments for AIDS"[42]. That is, on the then most common drug used in combatting HIV/AIDS: AZT, which had become available on prescription in the UK in 1987. But AZT had a range of side-effects such as headaches, nausea, and muscle fatigue, which made individuals feel worse taking the medication than they were without it[43]. For some in the LGBT community, these side-effects were sufficient to maintain the campaign for better medication, rather than settle for the harshness of AZT. One of those who was active in that way was Cass Mann, a nightclub owner who was the primary target of the *New Stateman*'s 1989 article. The *Pink Paper* stepped in to support the "Positively Healthy" campaign (as it was known)[44]. The *New Statesman* then embarked on legal action claiming that the *Pink Paper* article was defamatory and libellous. The case was eventually thrown out by the High Court, although in a separate action in 1992 the *Pink Paper* settled out of court with the original author, Duncan Campbell[45].

In the 1990s, in the aftermath of the Defend Gay's the Word and the Our Right to Speak campaigns, with the implementation of Section 28, and the continuing battle against HIV/AIDS, Britain's more progressive media began to engage more sympathetically with LGBT matters. For some in the LGBT community it seemed evocative of a guilty conscience: even W. H. Smith, which had banned *Gay News* not much more than a decade earlier, was exploring ways of tapping into the 'pink pound'. As Hegarty explained to the London *Times* in August 1993, when the newspaper sought to understand the trend,

> I think the liberal establishment is crippled with guilt in the light of AIDS and a right-wing, anti-gay backlash, people in the media see a debt to the gay community. They demonstrated against and failed to stop Clause 28 and feel they owe gay people something because of their contribution to the media. These are people who define themselves by their liberal consciences.[46]

He also spoke out against the commercialised notion of a metropolitan queer lifestyle writing, as Frank Mort has noted, in socialist magazines against London becoming "an alienating and individualised pleasuredrome" (1996, 165). This had been a theme of Hegarty's personal political activity for years: combining leftist ideals with a clear sense of what LGBT life could be – and in the minds of some activists, should be.

The organisation which exemplified Hegarty's twin beliefs in liberation and socialism was Icebreakers, a gay socialist befriending – and in many cases 'be-partnering' – society established in the mid-1970s out of which grew Gay's the Word and through which activists as varied as Mark Ashton on the one hand and Jim MacSweeney on the other could meet and get to know each other[47]. As MacSweeney recalled in a recent interview for the London-based lifestyle magazine *Attitude*, it was through Icebreakers that he met "friends [...] who continue to be

[42] *New Statesman*, 29 September 1989.

[43] *The Independent on Sunday*, 2 May 1993.

[44] *The Pink Paper*, 16 September 1989; 7 October 1989; 28 April 1990.

[45] *The Pink Paper*, 29 June 1990.

[46] *The Times*, 11 August 1993.

[47] My thanks to Lisa Power for discussing various unwritten aspects of Icebreakers, Switchboard, and related organisations such as Dykes and Faggots Together (DAFT) with me – not least the possibility of 'pulling' through attending Icebreakers!

among my closest"[48]. In addition to their meetings, Icebreakers ran a telephone advice service and proclaimed themselves as a "collective of gay men dedicated to bringing about the end of civilisation as we know it"[49]. To achieve that aim, Icebreakers held joint events with activists from Rock Against Racism and Rock Against Sexism, for example, organised popular discos at the Fallen Angel, and held discussion meetings at Gay's the Word about various topics, including equalising the age of consent. They were an offspring of the liberation ethos of the early 1970s and provided a bridge not only between various phases of the liberation movement in Britain, but also a transatlantic link to the United States and Canada through cross-advertising.

6. Conclusion

I began this article with a series of questions in mind, the most important of which aimed at an examination of the relationship between Irish activists and the LGBT civil rights movements in London in the 1980s. The fact that the lead figure in LGSM was from Northern Ireland, that the managers of Gay's the Word bookshop for almost its entire forty-year existence were (and are) from the island of Ireland, and that some of the leading figures in the vibrant gay liberation cultural scene in South London in the 1970s and 1980s were Irish, may well be a coincidence. But I do not think so. The experience of being a young gay Irish (or Northern Irish) migrant to London in the 1970s and 1980s provided plenty of encouragement to be active in the struggle for civil rights, however modest that participation turned out to be. Not every activist, after all, was as politically committed as Mark Ashton or Paud Hegarty. In the absence of fuller research, any direct conclusions as to the extent of the impact of Irish involvement in the LGBT civil rights movement in London must inevitably be tentative: in other words this is not a coincidental aspect of the 1970s and 1980s but a potentially rich seam of subjectivity which deserves fuller exploration.

The act of recovery has, of course, useful historiographical implications, too, not least that the study of migrants and transnational solidarities allows for – even encourages – a move beyond the instinctive methodological nationalism of LGBT/queer history. And, albeit with a different group of activists than those examined here, the instinctive westernism of that same historiography. In other words, we can and should contemplate and theorise transnational histories of what was, ultimately, a transnational lesbian and gay civil rights and liberationist movement (albeit complicated by a variety of differential factors). It still is. And it is with this thought that I wish to end. In recognising and considering the relationship between gayness, migration, and the tensions between assimilation and integration, and by bringing the transnational into the writing of LGBT/queer history, historians can catch up with our geographer colleagues, and begin to gain an even richer sense of the politics of gay and lesbian liberation – the latter will require careful consideration given the relative absence of organisations dedicated to lesbian liberation, particularly within minorities – and the lived experience of LGBT people. Therein lies an LGBT/queer history which is inclusive of differential characteristics such as race, gender, and religious identities, and which is made from the bottom up.

[48] *Attitude*, 4 January 2019.
[49] *Gay Christian* 31 (February 1984).

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