

Robert Deam Tobin

Henry J Leir Chair Annual Report

July 2019

SCHOLARSHIP

I: LGBTQ+ Worcester For The Record

The most significant scholarly activity for me this year was “LGBTQ+ Worcester For The Record,” a major exhibit at the Worcester Historical Museum, which will be up from April 25, 2019, to October 12, 2019. This has been the product of two years of research, including extensive work with students. In addition, I and my two co-curators (Stephanie Yuhl, from the College of the Holy Cross, and Joe Cullon, from Worcester Polytechnic Institute) are preparing a catalog. This project brought together scholars and students from three campuses, working together with a significant local cultural institution, and reaching out to the community in ways that connect the work of the university closer with a broad public.



FOR THE RECORD LGBTQ+ Worcester



April 26-October 12, 2019

Opening Reception

Thursday, April 25, 2019

5:30-8:00pm

Brief Remarks at 7pm

Reservations: \$20 per person
(508) 753-8278 or
www.worcesterhistory.org
Cash Bar



30 Elm Street, Worcester, MA

In partnership with



Sponsored by



Figure 1: Announcement of the Opening Reception for LGBTQ+ Worcester

In order to make the project possible, we applied for and received a major grant from the Massachusetts Council of Humanities. To help publicize the exhibition, I gave on-air interviews to numerous radio and television outlets, including WXLO, Unity Radio, “Talk of the Commonwealth,” and Channel 3.



Figure 2: Receiving Award from Safe Homes: Joe Cullon (WPI), Stephanie Yuhl (Holy Cross), Robert Tobin (Clark), Bill Wallace (WHM), and David Conner (WHM)

The exhibition has received considerable attention from the press, including lengthy positive reviews in the *Telegram and Gazette* and *Worcester Magazine*. Because of the exhibition, Safe Homes, a local charity devoted to LGBTQ+ youth, awarded the museum its People of Courage Award at its 2019 gala. Worcester Pride has named the museum a Grand Marshall of the Pride Parade, which will take place in September. The director of the museum, Bill Wallace, received the Mass Humanities 2019 Mass Humanities Commendation Award, in part because of this project.

As part of this project, students and I also put up a satellite exhibit on Clark LGBTQ History, which will be up in the Student Center until the end of October. Holy Cross also had an exhibit up for a month, and WPI will have one next fall.



Figure 3: Michael Snediker, Lisa Diedrich, and Henry Abelow, with Sigmund Freud and Robert Tobin

Connecting this exhibit to literary figures who are from Worcester or worked at Clark, we had a minisymposium, where we invited scholars to speak on their research about Elizabeth Bishop (poet who was born and buried here), Frank O'Hara (poet who grew up in Grafton and attended school in Worcester), Paul Monette (novelist and memoirist who taught briefly at Clark). About 50 people attended the symposium. The speakers were Michael Snediker (on Elizabeth Bishop), Henry Abelow (on Frank O'Hara), and Lisa Diedrich (on Paul Monette).

The highlight of the evening was a lecture by retired Clark professor, William Koelsch, who, while at Clark, taught one of the first courses in the nation on Gay Liberation in 1975, and also published extensively in the gay press from the '70s to the '90s under the pseudonym "A. Nolder Gay." His talk was his first discussion of that aspect of his life at the university:

William Koelsch (Clark University), "The Revenant Returns."

Earlier in the semester, a professor from Holy Cross who grew up in Worcester and founded one of the earliest gay student alliances in the United States at Columbia University in 1966 and went on to lead the campaign for an anti-discrimination ordinance in Worcester in 1974, came to speak as well:

Thomas Doughton (College of the Holy Cross), Sexuality and Race.

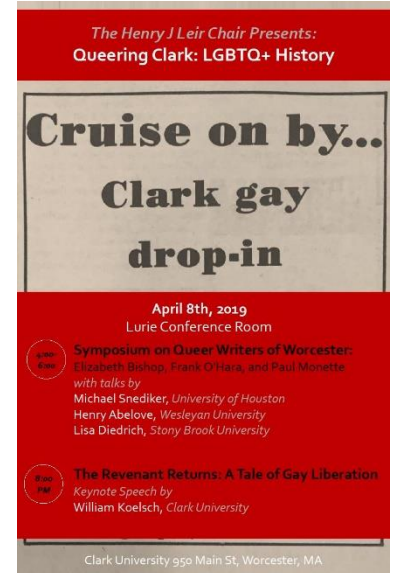


Figure 4: Cruise on by: Clark University LGBTQ+ History

II: Publications in German Studies and Comparative Literature

The most significant publication in German Studies and Comparative Literature this year is my essay on human rights and Johann Joachim Winckelmann, the eighteenth-century art historian and critic:

"Winckelmann und die Menschenrechte," forthcoming in *Winckelmann and His Passionate Followers: Queer Archeology, Egyptology, and the History of the Arts, 1750-2018*

I also published the following essay, which although short, required a considerable amount of time and energy to put together:

"Classical Studies," in *Global Encyclopedia of Gay, Lesbian, Bisexual, Transgender, and Queer History*, ed. Howard Chiang, Jennifer Evans, et al (New York: Charles Scribner, 2019): 364-67.

In addition, I published two book reviews. While these are also short, they also take a great deal of time, to read the original book with care and write a response that will – one hopes – both introduce readers to the book and carry on the books discussion and argument:

Richard O. Block, *Echoes of a Queer Messianic: From "Frankenstein" to "Brokeback Mountain."* Forthcoming in *MLQ*.

Not Straight from Germany: Sexual Publics and Sexual Politics since Magnus Hirschfeld, ed. by Annette F. Timm, Rainer Herrn, and Michael Taylor Thomas, forthcoming in *German Studies Review*.

III: Talks in German Studies and Comparative Literature

Two of my talks were on the eighteenth-century art historian and critic, Johann Joachim Winckelmann:

“Winckelmann und die Menschenrechte,” Keynote Addresss at the conference on
“Winckelmann and His Passionate Followers: Queer Archeology, Egyptology, and the History of the Arts, 1750-2018,” Hannover, June 2018.

“Johann Joachim Winckelmann: Queer Desire and the Birth of Human Rights,” German Studies Association, Pittsburgh, September 2018.

The Winckelmann project focuses on questions of the birth of human rights in the eighteenth century; I am also beginning work on a new project on questions of sexuality and the far right. I was able to speak about this work, first at Dartmouth College and then at Richmond University in London:

“Masculinity Rising: Homosexuality and the Far Right,” Dartmouth College, August, 2018.

“Early Twentieth-Century Masculinism and the Roots of the New Right,” at the inaugural conference of the Centre for the Analysis of the Radical Right, **“A Century of the Radical Right: New Approaches,”** Richmond University, London, United Kingdom, May 2019.

IV: Additional Speakers

I was also able to bring in two additional scholars. Howard Chiang (University of California, Davis) gave a talk titled, “Why Queer Theory Needs Sinophone Studies.” Andreas Önnelfort (Göteborg University, Sweden), spoke on the history of the Freemasons.



Figure 5 (left): Andreas Önnelfort with Freud



Figure 6 (right): Howard Chiang with Freud

V: Additional Scholarly Work

I reviewed one book manuscript for a press, one article proposal for a journal, and one book proposal for a press. This is hidden work that takes considerable care, as one needs to follow the sometimes quite abstract and abstruse arguments, determine whether they fit the needs of the publication venue, and then make constructive suggestions for improvement.

I also spoke at length about Eurovision and diversity with the French reporter Benjamin Pierret, who quoted me extensively in his article, “L’Eurovision, vitrine progressiste d’une Europa (qui se veut) ouverte,” which appeared online at BFMTV, May 17, 2019.

TEACHING

VI: *Faust and the Faustian*

I am happy to say that I had a very successful semester teaching the Faust myth to a motivated group of 12 students, who were able to read all of Goethe’s *Faust* (both parts 1 and 2), as well as Thomas Mann’s lengthy novel, *Doktor Faustus*.



Figure 7: *Faustians Being Devilish*

In addition, four students from the seminar had strong enough German that we met separately once a week and worked our way through Goethe’s *Faust I* in German, as a directed study.

Two students from the class exhibited posters on the Faustian at Academic Spree Day, our Undergraduate Research Conference:

Samantha Whittle, “Literary and Contemporary Women in Far-Right German Nationalism”

Drew Brodney, “Heimat and the Faustian”

Samantha Whittle also presented her findings as a paper at a conference for undergraduate research in the foreign languages at Worcester State University.

VII: *Sexuality Courses*



Figure 8: Students researching Clark's LGBTQ+ History in the archives of Goddard Library.

The exhibit on Worcester LGBTQ+ History mentioned above completely changed my sexuality courses, “Sexuality and Human Rights” in the fall of 2018 (15 students) and “Sexuality and Textuality” in the spring of 2019 (17 students). They helped perform the research and write the catalog for the Clark satellite exhibit.

I was particularly pleased that I was able to work with some students beyond the classroom. I hired Griffin Minigiello as Research Assistant for LGBTQ+ history summer 2018 (Mellon Foundation money); I successfully nominated him for the advisory board of the LGBTQ+ History exhibit at the Worcester Historical Museum, which met monthly. I also hired Arai Long and Toni Armstrong to be Peer Learning Assistants in CMLT 132 (Co-editor of *Cruise on by* and Co-curator of *Queering Clark*)



Figure 9: Toni Armstrong, Robert Tobin, and Griffin Minigiello at the opening of LGBTQ+ Worcester at the Worcester Historical Museum

In addition the students of Sexuality and Textuality promoted our satellite exhibit about Clark LGBTQ+ history at the Academic Spree Day Conference:

- Lisa Consiglio, Olivia Stanley, Halley Gellatly, Jessy Tardif, Carly Dillis, “Queering Clark: The 70s”
- Ben Healey, Nell Matheny, Samara Houle, Dianny Matos Diaz, “Queering Clark: The 80s”
- Mia Schwartz, Lilith Bourne, Katelyn Godfroy, Caroline Chang: “Queering Clark: The 90s”
- Mallory Trainor, Haley Reash-Henz, Madison Graham, Sammy Flynn: “Queering Clark: Since 2000”

VIII: *National Imagination*

As usual, I taught in the department’s signature course, the National Imagination (43 students) this time with colleagues Juan Pablo Rivera (Puerto Rico) and Beth Gale (France). In addition to the two posters that grew out of the Faust course, I was happy to sponsor Emma Pulizzi, who presented a poster at Academic Spree Day called “Sexuality, Gender Expression, and National Identity in Film.”

IX: *German Students and the German Academic Exchange Service (DAAD)*

Elizabeth Lloyd won the J. Fannin King Award for departmental excellence this year, because of her enthusiastic participation in the German program, including serving as a wonderful teaching assistant in the language courses. Over the course of her time at Clark, she won two awards through the DAAD, the German Academic Exchange Service, one for a summer internship in the Emigré Memorial German Internship Program (EMGIP), and one for a weekend immersion event at the University of Pennsylvania called the Graduate School Experience, which she won this year.



Figure 10: Elizabeth Lloyd, Winner of the J. Fannin King Award for Excellence in Comparative Literature

In addition, as campus DAAD advisor, I oversaw the interview process that led to the selection of Mukadder Okuyan as our expedited candidate for a one-year research fellowship in Germany. She will be heading there this fall.

X: Additional Professional Service

Within the department, I oversee both the Comparative Literature program and the German program, which are both small, but nonetheless require time and attention.

I also performed, once again, an annual review of a colleague who believes that the department chair cannot assess her fairly.

In terms of university service, I am on the Research Board, which meets every other week to promote scholarship at Clark. I am also on the Board of Trustees' Advancement Committee, which met several times a year.

Perhaps the most interesting work at the university level has been my membership in the Diversity and Inclusion Taskforce of the Alumni Council, which is trying to increase alumni participation by people of color as well as LGBTQ people.

In terms of national professional service, I was a reviewer for the Fulbright agency (which involved numerous proposals for study in Western Europe). I also served as an external reviewer for candidates for promotion at the University of Washington and Australian National University. This involves reading the body of work published by the scholars in question and determining whether this work merits promotion.