

Institution: King's College London
Unit of Assessment: 29 English Language and Literature
Title of case study: Queer@King's Research, Community-Building, Cultural Production, and Advocacy
<p>1. Summary of the impact (indicative maximum 100 words)</p> <p>Established in 2003, Queer@King's provides a focus for queer studies research and a meeting place for queer scholars and wider LGBTQ communities, including activists, artists, advocates, curators, performers, school educators, and writers, in which to share ideas and shape public discourse. Through Queer@King's, academics have enhanced queer life and civil society in London, and developed a remit around cultural production and advocacy that is both national and international. Impact includes shaping public discourse and informing public understanding about queer histories; challenging dominant assumptions about sexual minority lives, including those of transsexuals; and informing educationalists and law makers. Submitted projects relate to the research of Prof. John Howard, Dr. Robert Mills, and Prof. Mark W. Turner.</p>
<p>2. Underpinning research (indicative maximum 500 words)</p> <p>The underpinning research featured in this case study was produced by three scholars who met at King's in 2001. Howard (appointed 2001; Professor since 2005) is a world-leading scholar of the queer American South, interested in the shaping and understanding of human difference (3.1, 3.2). Mills (KCL 2001-12) has a committed research interest in the interface between academic queer studies, public history and museums—conceptualizing ways to 'read' objects and artefacts as queer and theorizing how queer history can be conveyed in the context of museums, galleries, and heritage sites, thereby challenging our understandings of identity, display, audience, and cultural legacy (3.5, 3.6, 3.7). Turner (appointed 2000; Professor since 2011) has longstanding research interests in queer urban cultural history and production, as a leading expert on the history of urban cruising (3.3) and twentieth-century Anglo-American queer cultural practices (3.4). They founded Queer@King's, an interdisciplinary research collective, in the lead up to the 2004 major international conference, <i>Queer Matters</i>.</p> <p><i>Queer Matters</i> was expressly designed 'as a springboard for citywide, national, and international collaborations' (5.1 below). Well over ten percent of the nearly 400 participants and 200 speakers were non-academic practitioners, who were further headlined in lunchtime film screenings, discussions and evening performance (on transgender life, music, and politics). Long-term relationships first established there with visual artists (such as Del LaGrace Volcano), library and museum professionals (Lesley Hall, Wellcome Library) and legal advocates would continue in the years to follow. Further, a multi-panel AsiaPacificQueer strand incorporated both university and independent scholar-advocates and activists; provided a planning session for the 2005 Bangkok international sexualities conference; and led to further debate in a special section devoted to <i>Queer Matters</i> in the journal <i>Inter-Asia Cultural Studies</i> (5.2 below).</p> <p>A pattern was established, and the decade-long <i>Queer Discipline</i> research seminar series (with a core audience of 15) drew increasing percentages of practitioners and other non-academicians, alongside annual symposia and special events (ranging to well over 200 participants) directly targeting queer constituencies beyond the university (5.3 below). As Queer@King's staff and postgraduates explored the social and cultural impact of their research, we held conferences on <i>Queer Autobiography</i>, <i>Queer Sound</i>, and <i>Queer/Animal</i>, organized jointly with the University of York. We also have hosted colloquia on the <i>Future of Queer Studies</i> and <i>Sexuality in the Archive</i>, which featured a range of speakers from universities, galleries, and archives, along with two events examining the work of key theorists Eve Kosofsky Sedgwick, shortly after her death, and Lee Edelman.</p> <p>The core institutional membership of Queer@King's comprises 9 faculty and 12 postgraduates, drawn widely from across the School of Arts and Humanities. The group is typically led by colleagues in English, who have broad and overlapping interests in queer histories, cultural practices and politics, and queer visual and textual studies (Elliott, Howard, Mills, Shalson, Turner). In addition to the collectively-produced research environment of our conferences, seminars, and symposia outlined above, our traditional underpinning academic research in the field extends back to the late 1990s and continues to the present, encompassing ground-breaking monographs, peer-reviewed articles and exhibition catalogue essays, supported by the AHRC,</p>

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Leverhulme, and the British Academy, among others.

3. References to the research (indicative maximum of six references)

3.1 John Howard, *Men Like That: A Southern Queer History* (University of Chicago Press, 1999). 100 Best Lesbian and Gay Non-Fiction Books, The Publishing Triangle. First Runner-Up, Ralph Henry Gabriel Prize, American Studies Association. Three dozen favourable reviews in the scholarly and popular press.

3.2 John Howard, 'Southern Sodomy; or, What the Coppers Saw' in C. Friend, ed., *Southern Masculinity: Perspectives on Manhood in the South since Reconstruction* (Athens: University of Georgia Press, 2009) pp. 196-218.

3.3 Mark W. Turner, *Backward Glances: Cruising the Queer Streets of New York and London* (London: Reaktion, 2003). Funded by British Academy Travel Grant. Favourable reviews in a wide range of academic journals (literature, cultural geography, urban studies, Victorian studies) in addition to the popular gay press. Named one of the '10 essential books about gay life in America', in the *Chicago Tribune*.

3.4 Mark W. Turner, 'Derek Jarman in the Docklands: *The Last of England* and Thatcher's London,' in John David Rhodes and Elena Gorfinkel, eds., *Taking Place: London and the Moving Image* (Minneapolis and London: University of Minnesota Press, 2011), pp.77-97.

3.5 Robert Mills, 'Queer Is Here? Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual and Transgender Histories and Public Culture,' *History Workshop Journal* 62 (2006): 253-63. Widely cited. The journal's fifth most-read article as of January 2012. Anthologized in *Gender, Sexuality and Museums: A Routledge Reader*, ed. Amy K. Levin (London: Routledge, 2010), pp. 80-88.

3.6 Robert Mills, 'Theorizing the Queer Museum', *Museums and Social Issues* 3.1 (2008): 45-57. Cited in 'Queering the Museum' exhibition brochure (Birmingham City Art Gallery and Museum, 2010).

3.7 Robert Mills, 'Male-Male Love and Sex in the Middle Ages, 1000-1500', in Matt Cook, Robert Mills, Randolph Trumbach and H.G. Cocks, *A Gay History of Britain: Love and Sex Between Men Since the Middle Ages* (Oxford: Greenwood, 2007), 1-44.

4. Details of the impact (indicative maximum 750 words)

Impact is most evident in three overlapping and mutually reinforcing areas:

4.1 Through Queer@King's, scholars have shaped and enhanced queer public discourse and community-building, especially around museums and cultural heritage. Queer@King's is at the forefront of a queer rethinking of museum and gallery space and its potential audience. Through impact on curatorial practice in the display and interpretation of objects and artefacts in a wide range of national and regional collections, led by **Mills**, Queer@King's has helped to inform public understanding of queer histories within the national past. Arising out of his research interests in 'queering the museum' and 'queer curating', **Mills** has given professional advice to curators in a number of London museums and museum-based projects. These include 'Untold London', a project of the London Museums Hub, on the queer interpretation of objects, focusing on the collection of the Museum of London, as well as a public lecture at Untold London's 'Write Queer London' festival at St. James' Church, Piccadilly (February 2012), a 'marvellously diverse [and] engaging exploration of LGBT history that brings it alive'. Along with two Queer@King's postgraduates, Dr. Richard **Maguire** and Dr. Jason **Narlock**, **Mills** has also provided consultancy at the Victoria & Albert Museum, and **Mills** acted as consultant to the British Museum, participating in discussions on 'queering the collections' (**5.4** below). These exhibitions have also helped to build a queer community in London through gallery talks and events. Notable here are the popular Friday Late 'Making a Scene' series at the V&A in 2009 and LGBT History Month gallery talks in 2010, where **Maguire** and **Narlock** spoke to capacity audiences of 35.

Mills' research and the Queer@King's model had a direct influence on the 2010-11 'Queering the Museum' exhibition at Birmingham City Art Gallery and Museum (**3.6** above). **Mill**'s 'Theorizing the Queer Museum' informed curator Matt Smith's approach and further was cited by Manchester artist Qasim Riza Shaheen as an influence. Smith participated in Queer@King's' 2011 'Sexuality and the Archive' colloquium, which brought together academics with archivists and curators from the British Library, British Museum, V&A, and Wellcome Library (40 in all), to forward queer collecting and curating, queer historical display, and cultural heritage. **Mills**' contribution to the volume *A Gay History of Britain* (**3.7** above) led directly to his appearance on television and radio, including a 2011 BBC Radio 3 documentary 'Out in the World: A Global History of Homosexuality' and a 2008 BBC4 documentary, 'Inside the Medieval Mind', for which **Mills** also acted as consultant (**5.5**

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below), thus extending the reach and significance of his impact.

Queer@King's research into queering museum spaces and presenting queer cultural histories has had international reach. **Turner** delivered a talk and hosted a discussion arising from current research on American abstract-expressionist Forrest Bess, at Artists Space, New York, as part of the 2012 Whitney Biennial. Established in 1972 and long connected to the alternative 'Downtown Scene', Artists Space remains the leading venue for the exhibition and discussion of experimental art practice, to which **Turner's** collaboration contributed.

4.2 Second, *Queer@King's* scholars have challenged dominant values and assumptions through queer cultural production, particularly in film and the visual arts. This is in part through curatorial activities. Since 2008, *Queer@King's* has expanded its cultural engagement with film to include a number of creative partnerships with galleries such as Tate Modern and events such as the London-based Fringe! Queer Film and Arts Fest. Along with Tate film curator Stuart Comer and art historian Dr. James Boaden (University of York), **Turner** was a lead member of the organizing committee for the film series 'Invocations and Evocations: Queer and Surreal' at Tate Modern in 2010. Funded in part by KCL's Annual Fund and *Queer@King's*, the events were held in conjunction with the London Lesbian and Gay Film Festival and the AHRC-funded Centre for the Study of Surrealism and its Legacies at the University of Manchester. **Turner**, Comer, and Boaden participated in a range of panel discussions as part of the series, along with *Queer@King's* postgraduate and film scholar Dr. Ryan Powell. **Turner's** expertise in queer urban studies (**3.3** above) was noted in reviews, including one praising the series for 'break[ing] queer film out of its usual sequestered context to uncover new connections for exploration'. The international audience for the films and panel discussions included artists, curators, academics, and others, estimated by the Tate to total 1500 (**5.7** below). **Turner** is developing a portfolio of curatorial practice, including, in 2011, an exhibition of **Howard's** queer documentary photography at the University of Reading, and he has been invited to curate a major exhibition of the queer art practice of writer-artist-filmmaker Derek Jarman in London in 2014 (**3.4** above, **5.6** below).

Queer@King's has impacted on the public understanding of sexual minorities through direct involvement in film making projects. Among documentary filmmakers presenting work at *Queer@King's*, director Moby Longinotto screened his *Smalltown Boy* in 2008 and subsequently collaborated with **Howard** on *The Joneses*. This was adapted directly from **Howard's** first monograph (**3.1** above), in which the film's protagonist, Jheri Rae Jones, a transsexual woman in small town Mississippi, was a central figure. The 2009 short was funded by Channel 4 and BritDoc and screened at film festivals in Brazil, Canada, Germany, Ireland, Italy, Sweden, and Switzerland, as well as Glasgow, London, and Sheffield. As part of this collaboration, **Howard** continues to work on his own documentary photography project, *Jones Portraits and Location Stills* (**5.8** below).

4.3 We inform and influence education and public policy, through collaborations with teachers and legal advocates-activists. This involves long-term commitments spanning the previous RAE and current REF cycles. **Howard** co-authored a decisive amicus brief in the US Supreme Court's 2003 *Lawrence v. Texas* decision, decriminalizing homosexuality; he organized the 2006 *Queer@King's* symposium 'Gay Divorce' to probe the policy implications of the dissolution of same-sex unions; his 2010 essay 'Southern Sodomy' (**3.2** above) reconsidered *Lawrence* and its 1986 predecessor *Bowers v. Hardwick*; and in the 2013 *Windsor* decision, the US Supreme Court, eight times citing *Lawrence*, legalized gay marriage (**5.9** below). **Howard** currently is advising the Southern Poverty Law Center on a potentially precedent-setting US Federal District Court case concerning LGBTQ social space.

Finally, *Queer@King's* continued to inform and influence education in Britain, with teachers and not-for-profit officials prominent among our collaborators. Building on a commitment made to primary and secondary teachers at our 'Queer Pedagogy' symposium in 2006—with presentations by Schools Out's Sue Sanders and Stonewall's Ruth Hunt—children and children's schooling remained at the centre of key *Queer@King's* events, including 2007's 'No Future Together' day conference addressed to the figural child and reproductive futurity, and 2008's symposium 'The Queer Child: Are the Kids Alright?' which featured screenings and discussions of two films on queer youth. This event thus epitomized all three *Queer@King's* strands of community-building, cultural production (especially around film and the visual arts), and advocacy (**5.10** below).

5. Sources to corroborate the impact (indicative maximum of 10 references)

A written testimonial from a not-for-profit official who is a long-term non-academic collaborator and participant in our programmes, attests to the impact upon his work and thinking; testimony is also

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available from three other individuals who can corroborate the impact of Queer@King's on the greater London LGBTQ community, and queer civil society in London and internationally.

5.1 In addition to the scanned Queer Matters conference programme, see our Queer@King's website overview at <http://www.kcl.ac.uk/artshums/ahri/centres/q@k/about.aspx>

5.2 Peter A. Jackson, Fran Martin, and Mark McClelland, eds. 'Re-placing queer studies: reflections on the Queer Matters conference', *Inter-Asia Cultural Studies* 6:2 (2005); 299-311.

5.3 To widen access and increase non-academic participation, Queer@King's activities are free and open to the public. For the range of Queer Discipline seminar series topics, averaging 8 meetings per year over the last decade, see the archive, <http://www.kcl.ac.uk/artshums/ahri/centres/q@k/eventsarchive/qdarchive/index.aspx>.

For the archive of additional events, see

<http://www.kcl.ac.uk/artshums/ahri/centres/q@k/eventsarchive/index.aspx>.

5.4 On the 2012 exhibition at the Museum of London, 'probably ... the bravest Museum in the UK when it comes to gay history', see the interview with curators Babs Guthrie and Kate Smith in *Polari Magazine*, <http://www.polarimagazine.com/interviews/write-queer-london/>. On the 'Write Queer London' festival talks, see

<http://untoldlondon.org.uk/events/entry/write-queer-london-at-st-james-piccadilly>. On British Museum curator Richard Parkinson's efforts, see

<http://lgbtialms2012.blogspot.co.uk/2012/08/richard-parkinson-british-museum-london.html>.

5.5 For Shaheen's description of the Mills essay's influence, see

<http://contactmcr.com/blog/2012/jan/28/backward-glances-brief-encounters-queer-movements/>.

For the colloquium overview and programme, see

<http://www.kcl.ac.uk/artshums/ahri/centres/q@k/eventsarchive/sacoll.aspx>. For descriptions of the

four-part radio series and four-part television series, see

<http://www.bbc.co.uk/programmes/b014x5lh>, and

<http://www.bbc.co.uk/programmes/b00b0wj7/episodes/guide>.

5.6 On the Turner lecture and discussion, see <http://artistspace.org/programs/inside-and-outside-forrest-besss-queer-life/>

Coinciding with Howard's delivery of the annual Stenton Lecture (<http://www.reading.ac.uk/internal/staffportal/news/articles/spsn-413045.aspx>) the Reading exhibition was the first complete solo show of his *Cruising Ground* series and was preceded by group exhibitions in the UK and US. See for example, the illustrations and descriptions at SOMArts Gallery, San Francisco: <http://www.queerculturalcenter.org/Pages/Chrono/Howard.html>.

5.7 The Tate series programme can be downloaded at

http://www.surrealismcentre.ac.uk/news_events/. For the research journal *Afterall*'s review of the series, see <http://www.afterall.org/online/antaomies.of.desire>

5.8 For a description of *The Joneses* and verification of funders, see

http://britdoc.org/real_films/britdoc_directory/the-joneses Howard appears in the screen credits as Executive Producer. For the 'Eye on Film' review, calling *The Joneses* 'refreshing' and 'surprisingly uplifting,' see <http://www.eyeforfilm.co.uk/review/the-joneses-film-review-by-jennie-kermode> Now in production as a feature-length documentary, it is due to premiere at the Sundance Film Festival in January 2015.

5.9 On the decisive role of the amicus brief in *Lawrence*, see Rick Perlstein, "What Gay Studies Taught the Court," *Washington Post*, 13 July 2003, B03, at

<http://www.glapn.org/sodomylaws/usa/usnews089.htm> On the role of *Lawrence* in the 2013 Supreme Court ruling in support of gay marriage, see the majority and minority opinions at www.supremecourt.gov/opinions/12pdf/12-307_6j37.pdf

5.10 On these events, see www.kcl.ac.uk/artshums/ahri/centres/q@k/eventsarchive/confs26.aspx;

<http://www.kcl.ac.uk/artshums/ahri/centres/q@k/eventsarchive/nofuture.aspx>; and

<http://www.kcl.ac.uk/artshums/ahri/centres/q@k/eventsarchive/qchild.aspx>