

Institution: Leeds Metropolitan University
Unit of Assessment: 36 Communication, Cultural and Media Studies, Library and Information Management
Title of case study: Gender and Sexuality in Public History
<p>1. Summary of the impact (indicative maximum 100 words)</p> <p>The historical emergence of sexual identities is a conceptual frame with which academic historians have long been familiar. It is in the practical applications of this conceptual framing that the distinctiveness of Alison Oram's research is located. Her work on the development and change in accounts of lesbian and gay sexuality has led to invitations to give public lectures at both regional and national institutions. Her research has increased the understanding of the context of interpreting under-represented themes in heritage. In addition, her consultative work with English Heritage has also informed and influenced policy debate and practice.</p>
<p>2. Underpinning research (indicative maximum 500 words)</p> <p>Colleagues in this unit have a long tradition of internationally significant research in gender and sexuality in contemporary culture, history and media. This includes the literary and cultural studies approaches to the work of Oscar Wilde and late nineteenth-century decadence (Robbins); gender crossing in twentieth-century popular culture and the emergence of a range of modern lesbian and transgender identities (Oram); the representation of sexuality and gender in public history (Oram) and issues of sexuality in post-war and contemporary popular media, especially Irish film (former colleague, Pettitt).</p> <p>As part of this community of colleagues with related interests, Oram's work involves archival research into newspaper sources; discourse analysis using theories of narrative and the analysis of change in language used in popular forms of communication (for example in the Sunday press, film and variety theatre). Her work also involves ethnographic research such as analysing visitor experience at heritage sites in the UK, the changing content of guidebooks over time and interviews with curators and managers of public history locations. It combines the insights and conceptual frameworks of academic history with an interest in how and why other historical practitioners (for instance, curators and managers of heritage sites such as stately homes) present the history of their sites in particular ways, which replicate the marginalisation of some historical identities, especially dissident sexual identities. Drawing on the archival research of her book <i>Her Husband was a Woman!</i> (RAE2008), which traced the sensationalism and prurient disapproval of alternative sexual identities in the popular press from the early to mid-twentieth century, Oram has developed a series of explanations for the absence of such identities from mainstream popular history, and in her engagement with the heritage industry has sought ways of redressing the heteronormative balance that the absence of those identities maintains. By engaging with heritage practitioners in the wake of the Single Equalities Act (2010), which made sexual identity a 'protected characteristic under the law, she has helped to inform their strategies for inclusive curation practices and display at a variety of heritage sites.</p>
<p>3. References to the research (indicative maximum of six references)</p> <p>Oram, A. (2007) <i>Her Husband Was a Woman! Women's Gender Crossing in Modern British Popular Culture</i>, London: Routledge. (RAE 2008)</p> <p>Oram, A. (2012) "'Love Off The Rails" or 'Over the Teacups' Lesbian Desire and Female Sexualities in Postwar Britain', In: Bauer, H. and Cook, M. (eds), <i>The Queer Fifties</i>. Palgrave Macmillan.</p> <p>Oram, A. (2011) "'Farewell to Frocks" – "Sex Change" in Interwar Britain: Newspaper Stories, Medical Technology and Modernity', In: Toulalan, S. & Fisher, K. (eds) <i>Bodies, Sex and Desire from the Renaissance to the Present</i>. Basingstoke, Palgrave MacMillan, pp. 102-117.</p> <p>Oram, A. (2011) 'Going on an Outing: The Historic House and Queer Public History', <i>Rethinking</i></p>

Impact case study (REF3b)

History, 15:2, June, pp. 189-207.

Oram, A. (2012) 'Sexuality in Heterotopia: Time, Space and Love Between Women in the Historic House', *Women's History Review*, 21:4, Sept, pp. 533-551.

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

Professor Alison Oram's research has informed, illuminated and challenged the cultural values and social assumptions associated with gender and sexuality. Specifically she has sought to enhance the public understanding of the major issues and challenges relating to gender and sexuality through engaging and stimulating public discourse on such issues.

She has also been solicited as a commentator on contemporary cultural and political issues based on her work on the historical emergence of sexual identities such as homosexuality and transgender. For example, she was interviewed and extensively quoted for an article on gay marriage for BBC *History Magazine* (January 2013), contributed a two-page review of the film *Albert Nobbs* for the *Times Higher Education* and spoke at a major History and Policy panel at the British Library on "Queer Homes, Queer Families" (17 Dec 2012).

Her work on the development and change in the cultural accounts of lesbian and gay sexuality, both in the 20th century media and in contemporary public history has also led to invitations to give public lectures at both national and regional institutions, including The National Portrait Gallery, The Geffrye Museum, the London Metropolitan Archives, Shibden Hall (Halifax), University College London (diversity month 2013). Community groups, including LGBT groups have also invited her to speak on her work and discuss it with local people. This includes Equity Partnership, Bradford (Feb 2012), and The Grave Passions arts event which was funded by London Borough of Southwark which was sold-out and oversubscribed.

Oram's interviews with curators at various case study historic sites has also increased the mutual understanding of the context of interpreting under-represented themes in heritage and has played a part in their interpretation policies and operational practices. For example, her work on historic houses and sexuality has led to consultation by English Heritage, in the context of recent parliamentary legislation (the Single Equalities Act 2010) which requires public bodies to actively consider their policies to take account of/not discriminate in relation to various protected characteristics, including sexual orientation and gender. On this basis, Prof Oram spoke at a staff seminar at English Heritage's York regional office (Feb 2012) and was an invited expert to the same organisation's consultation on under-represented heritage in May 2012.

In sum, Prof Oram's research has contributed to a greater recognition of diversity among public and statutory bodies in the heritage industry, and increased understanding of how themes in sexuality, family and gender can be presented to public audiences. Her work also contributes to current policy debates through engagement with heritage professionals. Furthermore her work contributes to public debates in civil society by appealing and engaging with both general and specific audiences.

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

Public lecture Prof Alison Oram and Jill Liddington 'Decoding Anne Lister: The Diaries of Anne Lister of Shibden Hall 1791-1840) 22nd June 2010, Leeds University Business School
<http://www.gender-studies.leeds.ac.uk/about/events/jill-liddington-and-alison-oram-joint-lecture-on-anne-lister.php>

Oram spoke at and was involved in a workshop at the 9th Annual LGBT London Metropolitan Archives conference *Resist, Action, Change* on Saturday 3rd December 2011.
http://217.154.230.218/NR/rdonlyres/2A12109E-BDB1-44C8-AB18-8E6C9451DBA0/0/FINALLGBT_Flyer_2011.pdf

Alison Oram 'Love Over the Teacups? Homosexuality, Domesticity and the Postwar Home', Geffrye Museum, London, 4th February 2012. <http://geffrye.twittweb.com/>

Prof Alison Oram 'Performance, Desire and the Masquerader': Talk at 'Grave Passions' arts event,

Nunhead Cemetery and The Ivy House, 11 March 2012 <http://londonist.com/2012/03/event-preview-grave-passions-at-nunhead-cemetery.php>

Article in *Times Higher Educational Supplement* reviewing the film Albert Nobbs 26th April 2012 <http://www.timeshighereducation.co.uk/features/culture/albert-nobbs/419738.article>

Estimated weekly circulation figures for THES 28,000 (source www.hepi.ac.uk)

English Heritage, responses from the consultation on under-represented heritages, 5th September 2012. Available from: <http://www.english-heritage.org.uk/publications/responses-from-the-consultation-on-under-represented-heritages/>

Raphael Samuel History Centre event hosted at the British Library, history and policy debate on queer homes, queer families, 17th December 2012. The event was supported by the AHRC and around 200 people attended. See <http://www.raphael-samuel.org.uk/events/queer-homes-queer-families-history-and-policy-debate> and <http://www.ahrc.ac.uk/News-and-Events/Events/Pages/Queer-Homes,-Queer-Families.aspx>

Prof Oram was interviewed and quoted in BBC History Magazine (January 2013) <http://www.historyextra.com/feature/historical-perspective-same-sex-marriages> estimated annual circulation figures 265,000 (source www.media.uk)

Prof Oram was involved in 'Queer Black Spaces: An Evening of Visual Art, Poetry and Research Exploring Black British LGBT Histories', University College London, 5 February 2013. This was a public event for their diversity month and was sold out http://www.ucl.ac.uk/equianocentre/Upcoming_events.htm

Prof Alison Oram 'Queer Intimacy and The Historic House Museum', Home Intimacies Conference, Geffrye Museum, Friday 22nd March 2013 <http://historiesofhomessn.files.wordpress.com/2013/02/home-intimacies-programme3.pdf>