

Dr Matt Houlbrook

Senior Lecturer in Modern British History

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About

I work on the cultural history of modern Britain, with particular interests in histories of gender, sexuality and selfhood. I blog about the 1920s and the practice of history from behind the scenes at <https://tricksterprince.wordpress.com/> (<https://tricksterprince.wordpress.com/>)

Biography

I grew up just outside Scunthorpe, the 'industrial garden town'. After studying history in Cambridge and getting a PhD from the University of Essex I ended up as a Junior Research Fellow at New College, Oxford. I worked at the University of Liverpool for five years before moving back to Oxford in 2008. Then it seemed time for a change of scene again: I joined the University of Birmingham in September 2013.

I have an obsession with cycling and bikes that borders on the unhealthy.

Postgraduate supervision

I am happy to supervise research postgraduates working on areas of modern British history relating to my own research interests. Feel free to get in touch if you want to talk through ideas or potential projects.

My previous and current students and topics include:

- Samuel Hyde, *'Highly Coloured Fiction': Political Newspaper Cartooning and Social and Labour Politics, c. 1881-1926* (Liverpool, awarded 2010)
- Sarah Newman, *The Talk of London: Interpreting Celebrity in the British Newspaper Gossip Column, 1918-1939*, (Oxford, AHRC funded; awarded August 2013)
- Matt Hollow, *Homemade Subjectivity: Power, Identity and the British Council Estate, 1920-1970*, (Oxford, AHRC funded; awarded October 2011)
- Charlotte Greenhalgh, *An Age of Emotion: Expertise and Subjectivity in Britain, 1937-1970*, (Oxford, Commonwealth Scholarship funded; awarded December 2012)
- Eloise Moss, *Notorious Thieves and Housebreakers: Burglary and Burglars in London, 1860-1939*, (Oxford, AHRC funded; awarded February 2013)
- Simeon Koole, *A History of the Sense of Touch in Britain, 1880-1970*, (Oxford, AHRC funded; October 2012-present)

Research

I work on the cultural history of 20th century Britain, with a particular interest in gender, sexualities and selfhood. My earlier research explored the relationship between the city, social practice and sexual identities--how modern urban culture shaped the ways in which men and women experienced, organised and understood their sexual desires and practices. Part of this was published as *Queer London: Perils and Pleasures in the Sexual Metropolis, 1918-57* by the University of Chicago Press in 2005. *Queer London* was awarded both the Longman-History Today Book of the Year Prize and the Royal Historical Society's Whitfield Prize for the best first book on British history.

Since I finished *Queer London*, I've worked on a variety of different projects that have grown out of things I've become interested in while teaching on Britain during and after the Great War. Among other things, this has resulted in articles on cosmetics, culture and the law in interwar London and an attempt to use Edith Thompson's letters to explore the relationship between reading and self-fashioning in the 1920s. Most recently, I have begun to focus more systematically on what seems to be a profound public fascination with individuals who 'faked it' between the wars - who crossed boundaries of class, gender, race, ethnicity or age in masquerading as something they were not. I'm interested, in particular, in what lives like this can tell us about the relationship between British society and culture and changing ideas of selfhood after the Great War. I am currently completing two books that have grown out of these interests: *The Prince of Tricksters: Cultures of Confidence in Interwar Britain* (for the University of Chicago Press) and *The Aftermath: The Great War and the Making of 1920s Britain* (for Profile Books). You can find out more about these research projects:

<https://tricksterprince.wordpress.com/my-current-projects/> (<http://tricksterprince.wordpress.com/my-current-projects/>).

Other activities

- I blog at <https://tricksterprince.wordpress.com> (<https://tricksterprince.wordpress.com>)
- I tweet at <https://twitter.com/TricksterPrince> (<https://twitter.com/TricksterPrince>)

Publications

Books

- **[Queer London: Perils and Pleasures in the Sexual Metropolis, 1918-57 \(University of Chicago Press, 2005\).](http://press.uchicago.edu/ucp/books/book/chicago/Q/bo3534360.html)** (<http://press.uchicago.edu/ucp/books/book/chicago/Q/bo3534360.html>) (University of Chicago Press, 2005).
- with H.G. Cocks (eds.), **[Palgrave Advances in the Modern History of Sexuality \(Palgrave, 2005\).](http://www.palgrave.com/products/title.aspx?is=1403912904)** (<http://www.palgrave.com/products/title.aspx?is=1403912904>) (Palgrave, 2005).
- with Sarah Newman, *The Press and Popular Culture in Interwar Europe* (Routledge, forthcoming 2014).

Journal special issue

- with Sarah Newman, 'The Press and Popular Culture in Interwar Europe', *Journalism Studies*, 14 (5) 2013.

Articles

- with Sarah Newman, 'Introduction: The Press and Popular Culture in Interwar Europe', *Journalism Studies*, 14 (5) 2013.

- 'Thinking Queer: The Social and the Sexual in Interwar Britain', in Brian Lewis (ed.), [British Queer History: New Approaches and Perspectives](http://www.manchesteruniversitypress.co.uk/cgi-bin/indexer?product=9780719088940) (Manchester, Manchester University Press, 2013).
- ['Commodifying the Self Within: Ghosts, Libels and the Crook Lifestory in Interwar Britain'](http://www.jstor.org/stable/full/10.1086/669735) (http://www.jstor.org/stable/full/10.1086/669735), *Journal of Modern History*, 85 (2) 2013, pp.321-63.
- [Fashioning an Ex-Crook Self: Citizenship and Criminality in the work of Netley Lucas'](http://tcbh.oxfordjournals.org/content/24/1/1) (http://tcbh.oxfordjournals.org/content/24/1/1), *Twentieth Century British History*, 24 (1) 2013, pp.1-30.
- ['A Pin to See the Peep Show: Culture, Fiction and Selfhood in the Letters of Edith Thompson'](http://past.oxfordjournals.org/content/207/1/215.full) (http://past.oxfordjournals.org/content/207/1/215.full), *Past and Present*, 207 2010, pp.251-49.
- 'Daring to Speak Whose Name? Queer Cultural Politics: 1920-1967', in Marcus Collins (ed.), *The Permissive Society and its Enemies* (Rivers Oram, 2008).
- ['The Man with the Powder Puff in Interwar London'](http://journals.cambridge.org/action/displayAbstract?fromPage=online&aid=714952) (http://journals.cambridge.org/action/displayAbstract?fromPage=online&aid=714952), *Historical Journal*, 50 (1) 2007, pp.145-171.
- with Chris Waters, ['The Heart in Exile: Detachment and Desire in 1950s London'](http://hwj.oxfordjournals.org/content/62/1/142.short) (http://hwj.oxfordjournals.org/content/62/1/142.short), *History Workshop Journal*, 62, 2006.
- 'Introduction' and 'Cities' in H.G. Cocks and Matt Houlbrook (eds.), *Palgrave Advances in the Modern History of Sexuality* (Palgrave, 2005).
- ['Sexing the History of Sexuality'](http://hwj.oxfordjournals.org/content/60/1/216.full) (http://hwj.oxfordjournals.org/content/60/1/216.full), *History Workshop Journal*, 60 (1) 2005, pp. 216-222.
- ['Soldier Heroes and Rent Boys: Homosex, Masculinities and Britishness in the Brigade of Guards: c.1900-1960'](http://journals.cambridge.org/action/displayAbstract?fromPage=online&aid=8751061) (http://journals.cambridge.org/action/displayAbstract?fromPage=online&aid=8751061), *Journal of British Studies*, 42 (3) 2003, pp. 351-388.
- ['Gay and Lesbian History at the National Archives: An Introduction'](http://www.nationalarchives.gov.uk/records/research-guides/gay-lesbian.htm) (http://www.nationalarchives.gov.uk/records/research-guides/gay-lesbian.htm), National Archives online publication.
- ["'Lady Austin's Camp Boys": Constituting the Queer Subject in 1930s London'](http://onlinelibrary.wiley.com/doi/10.1111/1468-0424.00251/abstract) (http://onlinelibrary.wiley.com/doi/10.1111/1468-0424.00251/abstract), *Gender and History*, 14 (1) 2002, pp. 31-61.
- ['Towards a Historical Geography of Sexuality'](http://juh.sagepub.com/content/27/4/497.full.pdf) (http://juh.sagepub.com/content/27/4/497.full.pdf), *Journal of Urban History*, 2 (4) 2001, pp. 497-504.
- 'For Whose Convenience? Gay Guides, Cognitive Maps and the Construction of Homosexual London: 1917-1967', in Simon Gunn and RJ Morris (eds.), *Identities in Space: Contested Terrains in the Western City since 1850* (Ashgate, 2001) pp. 165-186.
- ['The Private World of Public Urinals: London 1918-1957'](http://www.ingentaconnect.com/content/maney/ldn/2000/00000025/00000001/art00005) (http://www.ingentaconnect.com/content/maney/ldn/2000/00000025/00000001/art00005), *London Journal*, 25 (1) 2000, pp. 52-70.

