

him, new variations appeared in pagan writings after the Golden Age of Hellenic civilization, and medieval Christian writers deliberately suppressed the homoerotic nuances of the figure. But in the world of Greek gods and heroes, Achilles remains the supreme example of the warrior imbued with passionate devotion to his comrade-in-arms.

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Warren Johansson

ACKERLEY, JOSEPH RANDOLPH (1896-1967)

British writer and editor. In 1918 Ackerley wrote a play "The Prisoners of War" about the cabin fever and repressed homoerotic longings of his own stint in a German camp during World War I. It was produced in 1925, by which time Ackerley had become a protégé of E. M. Forster. Forster arranged for him a nebulous position with the Maharajah of Chhatarpur, whose misadventures in pursuit of homosexual love Ackerley mercilessly lampooned in his travel book *Hindoo Holiday* (1929).

The frustrations of Ackerley's own inhibited sexual encounters with working-class men and men in uniforms led him to concentrate his affections on his dog, an Alsatian named Queenie, who is the main romantic interest of *My Dog Tulip* (1956), and of his one novel, *We Think the World of You* (1960), which juxtaposes the pleasures of owning a dog with the difficulties of having a lower-class beloved. After Queenie's death and Ackerley's retirement from the BBC (where he had been an editor of *The Listener*, 1935-59), he journeyed to Japan, where he had a modicum of sexual gratification. Ackerley wrote an obituary of Forster and

sold Forster's letters to the University of Texas, then predeceased him by three years.

Just before his death, Ackerley completed a memoir (*My Father and Myself*) in which he fantasized that as a youth his guardsman father had prostituted himself to rich patrons, thereby securing the financial stability that was eventually to afford his son the opportunity to rent later generations of guardsmen for mutual masturbation. Unfortunately, many of his admirers have taken this account to be established fact.

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Stephen O. Murray

ACQUIRED IMMUNE DEFICIENCY SYNDROME

See AIDS.

ACTIVE-PASSIVE CONTRAST

Common usage divides homosexual behavior into active and passive roles. These terms are ambivalent and often confusing.

A truism of physics is that bodies may be either at motion or at rest. Inert objects, however, can only respond to external attraction and repulsion. It is the property of living things that they can initiate activity as well as respond (or refuse to respond) to stimuli. This last distinction is the basis of commonsense notions of active personalities as against passive ones. Some individuals seem to expend energy freely while others conserve it. In addition to this expend-conserve model, the active-passive contrast corresponds in large measure to those of lead-follow and command-obey.

Around such notions the popular morality of ancient Greece and Rome constructed a sexual dichotomy that classified participants in sexual acts not so

much according to the male-female difference, based on body build and genitalia, or the heterosexual-homosexual contrast of object choice, both of which are familiar to modern thinking, but in a stark opposition of the doer and the one who is done to. The doer (agent) is the phallic male, his receiving partner (patient or pathic) either a female or a pubescent boy. (Sometimes older males could enact the passive role, but they were generally disprized in consequence, for the paradigm admits of only one role for the adult male.) The active-passive contrast largely corresponds to the penetrator-penetratee dichotomy. In modern sexual encounters, the penetrator can be, with respect to overall body movement, largely passive, amounting to a contradiction. The ancients avoided this problem by their tendency to analyze oral-phallic activity as irrumation, that is, where the penetrator engages his partner with vigorous buccal thrusts. A common belief in this system is the notion that only the active partner experiences pleasure; the role of the passive is simply to endure. It is easy to see how such a model of dominator and dominated would accord with the mindset of a slave-owning society.

This contrast of active vs. passive is abundantly illustrated in Greek and Latin sexual texts, and as these are the foundation of the Western tradition their formulae have often been echoed, though changed—consciously or unconsciously—to fit new social norms. The contrast is also found in medieval **Scandinavia**, in our **prisons, jails, and reformatories**, and to a large extent in contemporary **Latin America**.

All these manifestations stem from popular modes of thought which tend to privilege the active, even predatory male. Other trends were found, however, in more cultivated spheres of Greco-Roman thinking. Self-restraint is a quality much praised in ancient ethical **philosophy**, and insofar as this ideal filtered down it tended to

mitigate the notion that the more rapacious copulation the active male could engage in the better. The Platonic tradition also reserved a special place for contemplation, a preference which passed into **Stoicism**, where it even may take the form of commendation of nonaction. These contemplative and Stoic trends migrated into **Christianity**, which however did break with classical tradition by excluding the adolescent youth from the category of licit sexual objects, thus clearing the way for the male-female dichotomy that has been dominant in Western culture ever since. Nonetheless, the pederastic ideal never completely died out, despite the winds of theological disapproval. Many medieval and **Renaissance** texts attest to the survival of pederastic patterns, at least among a cultivated few.

In modern heterosexual practice the identification of the male with the active and the female with the passive was sealed by the repressive norm of the passionless female and the standard injunction of the "missionary position," in which the penetrating male lies atop his partner. Feminism has sought to combat such restrictions and today a variety of sexual positions are noted in every sex manual. With respect to male and female homosexual conduct, however, the notion lingers that sexual activity, and indeed the whole relationship, must be structured around the active-passive contrast. Thus gay men and lesbians are often asked: "Are you active or passive?" It is frequently difficult to persuade the interlocutor that the two roles are assumed alternately, or that one pattern may prevail in bed while the opposite occurs in everyday life. That is to say, a "butch" lesbian accustomed to take the lead in social encounters may be responsive rather than aggressive in bed. For a time "politically correct" gay and lesbian thinking condemned sex-role differences in couples, claiming that they were a reactionary mimicry of heterosexual norms, but it is now generally recognized that

whether these patterns are to be honored or overcome should be a matter of individual choice.

See also Pederasty; Slavery.

Wayne R. Dynes

ACTIVIST, GAY

Familiar in the 1970s, the expression "gay activist" has become less common owing to the ebbing of the more strenuous and utopian aspects of the gay liberation movement. It served to denote someone choosing to devote a major share of his or her energies to the accomplishment of social change that will afford a better life for homosexual men and lesbian women. Its most famous institutional embodiment, subsequently imitated in many parts of the world, was the Gay Activists Alliance (GAA), formed in New York City in the wake of the 1969 *Stonewall Rebellion*. The group took as its symbol the Greek letter lambda, apparently because of its association with energy transformation in physics. Unlike the New Left, GAA was expressly a "one issue" organization, refusing to submerge the cause of gay rights in a network of social change groups, what came to be known as the Rainbow Coalition. In Europe the term "gay militant" is sometimes found as a variant, but in North America the word militant is generally eschewed because of its Old Left connotations and limitations.

The history of the idea of gay activism displays a complicated pedigree. The concept is rooted ultimately in the perennial contrast between the active and the contemplative life—the latter being traditionally preferred. In 1893, however, the French Catholic philosopher Maurice Blondel in essence turned the tables in his book *L'Action*. Blondel, in keeping with the vitalist currents of the day, held that philosophy must take its start not from abstract thought alone but from the whole of our life—thinking, feeling, willing.

Shortly thereafter, in Central Europe Rudolph Eucken, who received the Nobel Prize for literature in 1906, developed his own philosophy of *Aktivismus*. At this time many figures of Germany's political and literary-artistic avant-garde were drawn to Franz Pfemfert's periodical *Die Aktion* (1911–32). Further permutations occurred with the Flemish nationalist Activists in Belgium and the Hungarian artistic movement, *Aktivismus*, that arose in the aftermath of World War I. As early as 1915, however, Kurt Hiller, a political theorist and journalist, as well as an advocate of homosexual rights, drew several strands together in his broader concept of *Aktivismus*, urging the intelligentsia to abandon ivory tower isolation and participate fully in political life. How the term activist in its political (and gay movement) sense reached North America in the 1970s can only be surmised. The mediation of German refugee scholars is likely, as is suggested by this 1954 quotation by Arthur Koestler: "he was not a politician but a propagandist, not a 'theoretician' but an 'activist'." (The reference, from *The Invisible Writing*, is to Willi Münzenberg, an energetic Communist leader in Paris in the 1930s.)

Wayne R. Dynes

ADELSWÄRD FERSEN, BARON JACQUES D' (1880–1923)

French aristocrat and writer. Descended from Marie Antoinette's lover Axel Fersen, the wealthy young baron wrote several volumes of poetry and fiction in the first decade of the century, including *Hymnaire d'Adonis*, *Chansons légères*, *Lord Lyllian*, and *Une jeunesse*. In addition, he edited and contributed to twelve monthly numbers of a literary periodical, *Akados* (1909). At the age of twenty-three he was arrested for taking photographs of naked Parisian schoolboys, but was allowed to go into exile on the