

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

See also Pederasty; Slavery.

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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.)

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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, *Akademios* (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

island of Capri for several years, later returning to France after having visited Sri Lanka and China.

The great love of his life was the boy Nino Cesarini, who lived with him in the Villa Lysis on Capri, which was filled with statues of naked youths and which is now overrun by weeds and stray cats. Adelswärd Fersen also wrote poems to a thirteen-year-old Eton schoolboy. He was the model for Baron Robert Marsac Lagerström in Compton Mackenzie's amusing novel *Vestal Fire* (1927), and was the hero of Roger Peyrefitte's historical fiction *L'exilé de Capri* (1959). He died of a drug overdose in 1923, having for years been an opium and cocaine addict. He had modeled his life on that of Count Robert de Montesquiou, but the latter refused to have anything to do with him, for even in Capri Adelswärd Fersen had caused scandals. He was even associated with Essebac (as the novelist Achille Bécasse was known), Norman Douglas, and Baron von Gloeden. The story of his sexual life is to be found in his own books, in the works of Norman Douglas, and in Peyrefitte's novel, which is spoiled by a mixture of fact and fiction.

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ADHESIVENESS

The concept of adhesiveness was introduced into English by the phrenologist Johann Gaspar Spurzheim (1776-1832) in the meaning of "the faculty that causes human beings to be attached to one another." It derived ultimately from the Latin verb *adhaerere*, as in Genesis 2:24, where St. Jerome's equivalent of "Therefore shall a man . . . cleave unto his wife" is "Quam obrem . . . homo . . . adhaerebit uxori suae." Diffusion of the concept of adhesiveness by the (pseudo-)science of phrenology enabled it to become part of the special vocabulary of the emerging homosexual

subculture of the nineteenth century. Phrenologists themselves grounded this passionate friendship—which could exist between members of opposite sexes as well as between those of the same sex—in the brain, giving it a material base and a congenital origin. Walt Whitman self-consciously narrowed the reference of the term "adhesive love"—which he also named "comradship"—to homosexual relationships, and in so doing coded his writings for the initiated reader.

Permutations of the Concept. George Combe (1784-1858), a middle-class lawyer from Edinburgh, met Spurzheim in 1815, and soon thereafter became a leader of British phrenology. His *Constitution of Man Considered in Relation to External Objects* (1828) became the basis of orthodox phrenology. His major contribution to the understanding of adhesiveness was his complex sense of the working of the "organ" and his additions to the iconography. He also contrasted the selfish side of adhesiveness with the nobler ends that had to be directed "by enlightened intellect and moral sentiment." Excess of adhesiveness could, however, amount to a disease.

At least two of the European contributors to the definition of adhesiveness may themselves have been homosexual: Spurzheim himself, and his younger Scottish contemporary Robert Macnish (1802-1837). In discussing women with small amativeness and large adhesiveness, he said that they "prefer the society of their own sex to that of men." Amativeness thus applied to relations between the sexes, while the other term was discretely given the implicit meaning of "homosexual attachment." Romantic passions between young people of the same sex Macnish deemed an "abuse of adhesiveness." He went so far as to describe a male couple whose mutual attachment was so excessive as to be "a disease."

There is no indication that Walt Whitman knew Macnish's writings. His own acquaintance with the phrenological