

First National Lesbian and Gay March on Washington. The handful of Asian lesbians and gay men who met at the conference, many for the first time, lobbied hard to have an Asian gay person (Michiyo Cornell) speak at the March rally. Tana Loy, an Asian lesbian from New York City, also addressed the Third World Conference. The energy and support generated as a result of this first meeting led many to see the value of support and organizing in their local areas. The Boston Asian Gay Men and Lesbians (BAGMAL), the first Asian gay group in the United States, was already a few months old at the time of the conference. The Gay Asians of Toronto was formed shortly afterwards by a participant at the conference.

Throughout the eighties other groups appeared in major cities. Some are of the more social club variety with leadership and participation by both Asian and non-Asian gay men. These clubs, modeled after the Black and White Men Together groups, sprang up in such cities as Chicago, Washington, San Francisco, Los Angeles, and New York. Other groups have agendas determined more directly for and by gay Asian men and Asian lesbians themselves. Included among these are the Alliance of Massachusetts Asian Gay Men and Lesbians, the Gay Asians of Toronto, and the Gay Asian Pacific Alliance (based in San Francisco and formed in 1988). Among Asian lesbian groups there is the Asian Lesbians of the East Coast (based in New York and formed in 1983), while on the West Coast the group called Asian Women organized in 1984 around the journal *Phoenix Rising*, then regrouped as Asian Pacific Sisters in August, 1988.

The First West Coast Asian/Pacific Lesbian and Gay Conference was held July 18, 1987 in West Hollywood, California, and the first North American Conference for Lesbian and Gay Asians was held August 19-21, 1988, in Toronto, Canada. The year 1988 also saw the formation of new groups for lesbians in San Francisco and Washington (D.C.) and the inaugura-

tion of Asian gay men's groups in San Francisco, Philadelphia, and Washington.

A distinctive feature of the North American gay Asian movement is its international perspective. Many individual activists and organizations maintain ties with gay groups and activists in East and South Asia—the political and cultural exchanges that have developed have enriched the movement on both sides of the Pacific. Of note is the gay South Asian newsletter *Trikone* (formed as *Trikon* in January, 1986) based in Palo Alto, California, which has inspired chapters in the Indian subcontinent as well as throughout North America.

Communities. With the rise of local groups and the building of local communities the climate for coming out for Asian gay men and lesbians improved throughout the 1980s. Asian gay communities in most cities are a diverse mix of North American-born and foreign-born men and women from a variety of East and South Asian cultural backgrounds with a substantial proportion of persons of mixed cultural heritage. These communities vary substantially from city to city. For example, groups in San Francisco with its high incidence of AIDS concentrate on AIDS-related issues while providing support and services for infected Asian people. In Toronto where a high proportion are Hong Kong-born Chinese, a lively gay Chinese culture based on the Cantonese dialect has developed. All communities were enlivened by the influx of Southeast Asian refugees into North American cities during the eighties.

Siong-huat Chua

ASTROLOGY

The history of astrology, the pseudoscience which claims to divine events from the positions of the heavenly bodies, has attracted considerable recent scholarship, but the sexual aspects have been neglected. In a passage in the *Confessions* (4:3), Augustine condemns astrology because it could excuse sin as under the

control not of the will but of the stars ("the cause of thy sin is inevitably determined by heaven"). For those who accepted the astrological systems, and many did in late Greek and Roman antiquity, the stars could explain attraction to members of one's own sex. The astral mechanism is detailed by Ptolemy of Alexandria (ca. A.D. 100–178) in the classic treatise on Hellenistic-Roman astrology: "Joined with Mercury, in honorable positions, Venus makes them . . . in affairs of love restrained in their relations with women, but more passionate for boys, and jealous." (*Tetrabiblos*, 3:3). The interpretation of this particular pairing of the planets was probably suggested by their Greek names Hermes and Aphrodite, which join to produce Hermaphroditos.

Babylonian astrology was the source of Greek astrology. Not surprisingly, then, a neo-Babylonian text of ca. 500 B.C. says that "love of a man for a man" is governed by the constellation Scorpio. The Greeks personalized astrology by developing the notion that each individual's character and destiny are determined by the position of the planets at his birth. Hellenistic-Roman Egypt saw astrological interpretation take the form that it was to retain through the **Renaissance**, though the intervention of Christianity and Islam caused the homoerotic readings of certain planetary dispositions to be suppressed and disappear from standard works. Ultimately, as has been seen in the case of Augustine, Christian scorn of astrology succeeded in driving the discipline underground, though it survived in Islamic lands.

During the Renaissance, as part of the overall program of revival of classical antiquity, the Florentine Neoplatonist Marsilio Ficino (who was homosexual) created a vision of the cosmos linking humanity with the heavenly bodies through emanations of love. At the same time the actual techniques of astrology enjoyed a remarkable resurgence, though with complicated readjustments to take account of shifts in the position of the heavenly bodies in the intervening centu-

ries. In the sixteenth century, for example, **Michelangelo**—whose horoscope showed just the conjunction of Mercury and Venus noted by Ptolemy—seems to have assuaged his guilty conscience with the belief that his attraction to his youthful assistants (*garzoni*) had been decreed by celestial forces beyond his control. François Rabelais, in the *Pantagrueline Prognostication* of 1532, spoke of "Those whom Venus is said to rule, as . . . Ganymedes, Bardachoes, Hufiers [fellators], Ingles." Some planets were held to be androgynous, because they are sometimes hot and sometimes cold. Thus Mercury was accounted hot and dry when near the sun, cold and moist when near the Moon. Clearly, then, the concept of sexual inclination as guided by the stars helped some of the system's adherents to grasp that their sexual interests were not a mere caprice or vicious deviation, but were essentially natural, being defined by cosmic imperatives.

In the seventeenth century, under attack by rationalism, astrology went underground again. The late nineteenth-century crisis of faith, however, engendered a compensatory upsurge of occult and esoteric beliefs, notably Theosophy (founded by Helena Petrovna Blavatsky in 1875). Theosophy, which had an attraction for some homosexuals (e.g., C. W. Leadbeater), incorporated **Buddhist** and Hindu elements, which henceforth played their role in some astrological systems. As the emerging homophile movement made it possible to discuss homosexuality in public, the long-suppressed erotic interpretation of certain signs reappeared in the literature. The first thoroughgoing modern attempt to correlate astrology with homosexual behavior was made in the 1920s by the German occultist and right-wing theorist Karl-Günther Heimsoth. Independently, the American homophile Gavin Arthur discovered the occult tradition in Paris in the 1920s. In 1960, having settled in San Francisco, he published a book, *The Circle of Sex*, which correlates character types with astrological influ-

ences. Arthur is credited with having launched the idea of the coming of the Aquarian Age, which was to become celebrated through the musical *Hair*.

In twentieth-century America astrology has exercised an enduring hold on the popular imagination, witness the newspaper columns devoted to the subject. Thanks in large measure to the symbiosis with the **Counterculture**, astrology gained a foothold in gay circles, and several paperbacks have appeared explaining the role of the stars in homosexual and lesbian destinies. Significantly, however, astrological explanations (based, as it were, on the cosmic environment) play no part in the current debate over acquired vs. constitutional factors in the etiology of sexual orientation. Today's astrology, the debased descendant of a millennial tradition, holds an essentially personal, often superficial significance for its adherents. Before dismissing its contribution entirely, however, one should note that man, unlike the lower animals, has no fixed mating season but copulates at all times of the year, a fact that may play an as yet undetermined role in the characterological variation of which homosexual orientation is but one aspect. In a sense, then, astrology, though rightly divested of its own credentials, may yet rank as the precursor of the emerging science of biometeorology that may shed unexpected light on the causes of homosexuality.

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Warren Johansson

**ATHENAEUS OF
NAUCRATIS (FLOURISHED
CA. A.D. 200)**

Author of the *Deipnosophistai*, or "Banquet of the Learned," of which 15 of some 30 books survive. It is a specimen

of "symposium literature" in which guests at a banquet discuss philosophy, belles lettres, law, medicine, cuisine, and other subjects. The framework, while occasionally tinged with humor, serves as a vehicle for the collections of excerpts that are introduced into the dialogue. Athenaeus cites some 1,250 authors, gives the titles of more than 1,000 plays, and quotes more than 10,000 lines of verse.

The significance of his work lies in showing that in cultivated pagan society at the close of the second century pederasty and all that related to it could be discussed freely and casually with no tone of reproach such as Christian apologists would like to trace back to the Golden Age of Hellenic civilization and beyond. The passions of legendary and historic figures for boys are mentioned, and famous boy-lovers are named: Alcibiades, Charmides, Autolycus, Pausanias, and Sophocles. Books and plays on pederasty are named and cited: *The Pederasts* by Diphilus, a play entitled *Ganymede*, a treatise *On Love* by Heraclides of Pontus, the play *The Effeminate* by Cratinus, and allusions to boy-love in Aeschylus and Sophocles. The creation of the Sacred Band of Theban warriors is ascribed to Epaminondas. The fondness of particular cities and ethnic groups for homosexual pleasures is mentioned: the Cretans, the Chalcidians of Euboea, the Medes, the Tuscans, the inhabitants of Massilia (Marseilles). Some individuals who were exclusively homosexual, such as Onomarcus and the philosopher Zeno, are named, with no implication that their conduct was deemed pathological or reprehensible.

The extant portions of the work—Book XIII is the most relevant—are a goldmine for the study of the homosexual side of classical civilization and the cultural expression of pederasty in the ancient world. Even when the compositions quoted have not survived, the titles and fragments preserved by Athenaeus give an idea of the volume of literature and art which male love inspired when it was an