

that this was a "ladies' auxiliary," created tension between DOB and its allies. The promiscuity of many homosexual men and the police harassment which they encountered struck the lesbians as an encumbrance and a stigma unjustly attached to them by society. At jointly sponsored events the men even questioned the need for a separate women's group, to which the DOB members replied by asserting their need for autonomy and their identification with a larger movement for the emancipation of women—foreshadowing the far more radical feminism of the 1960s.

On the whole, DOB attracted significantly fewer members than did the male organizations, in part because the pool of potential constituents was smaller, in part because women had a more precarious economic position in American society. Professional women who had been successful felt that they did not need the group, and those who benefited from its nurturing efforts achieved independence and "graduated." The founders and leaders were white-collar semi-professionals who could not identify with the blue-collar bar subculture of working women, reflecting the fact that women are generally more sensitive to class identity than are men. The lesbian patronage of the bars belonged to a different subculture with its own well-defined identity—one that the membership of DOB generally did not share. But during the initial phase of the American homosexual movement, the Daughters of Bilitis were the rallying point for lesbian interests and aspirations.

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Evelyn Gettone

BIOGRAPHY AND AUTOBIOGRAPHY

The appeal of biography is multifaceted, ranging from a desire to elevate one's imagination by dwelling on the accomplishments of great figures to an all-

too-human love of gossip and muckraking. Moreover, the form of a human life, from birth to death, provides a readily comprehensible narrative structure in which the reader can identify with the subject as the moving center. Homosexual autobiographies, uncommon before modern times, are the external embodiment of a process of internal self-examination; in writing autobiography and publishing it, one willy-nilly creates an apologia for oneself. Problems of concealment are common in the biographies and autobiographies of homosexuals; lengthy tomes have been compiled about such figures as **Walt Whitman** and **Willa Cather** without a mention of their sexuality. Determining the sexual orientation of noted figures of the past is significant for its own sake: the establishment of historical truth in its fullness. This aim of truth usually accords (though it occasionally conflicts) with the psychological need that members of any minority group have for heroes. And homosexuals and lesbians, so often stereotyped en masse as hopelessly neurotic if not deranged, understandably yearn for reassurance that all have not been cases in the medical waxworks museum of **Krafft-Ebing's** *Psychopathia Sexualis*. Although such psychological needs are normally met by candid and accurate biographies, there is also a temptation to provide "gay hagiography," works which extoll an individual because he or she is homosexual, not to mention the "reclamation" of figures whose sexual orientation is uncertain.

Classical Antiquity. The first hesitant emergence of biography as a genre about 500 B.C. is grounded in Greek individualism, the idea that the uniqueness of the human personality stands over against and must not be subsumed by one's public persona as fixed by official or class standing. This awareness allowed the Greeks to maintain biography as a genre distinct from **history**, which is concerned more with the general and typical. The Theban poet **Pindar** (518–438 B.C.), whose writings are suffused with homoerotic sentiment,

eulogized great athletes in brief odes. Broadly speaking, the funeral oration, one of the sources of Greek biography, tends to fall into the trap of "de mortuis nil nisi bonum," the stipulation that only admirable aspects of the deceased should be displayed. Another type of skewing is the novelized biography, as seen in Xenophon's (ca. 434–ca. 355 B.C.) *Cyropaedia*. In later variants the temptation to invent details is freely indulged, a temptation fostered by increasing demand for "juicy bits." On the whole these faults are remarkably avoided in the portraits of *Socrates* by his school: the writers candidly reveal the faults as well as the stature of this lover of men. Relatively few lives of women were produced; here, however, the career of the Lesbian poet *Sappho* (who flourished ca. 600 B.C.) provided a focus, though one afflicted to some extent with romantic invention.

While much has been lost, we know that Greek biographies concentrated on two types of people: public figures (statesmen, law givers, rulers, and generals) and intellectuals (poets and philosophers). A remarkable collection of biographies of public men survives: the *Parallel Lives* of *Plutarch* (ca. A.D. 46–ca. 120), who portrays an equal number of Greek and Roman subjects, preparing the way for international biography in contrast to the nationalistic (and even localistic) restriction of earlier Greeks. Although *Plutarch* was keenly interested in psychological motivation, his mentions of homoerotic aspects in some of his subjects are totally matter-of-fact: he takes his subjects' interest in boys as almost routine. *Diogenes Laertius* and *Philostratus* wrote lives of the philosophers replete with pederastic revelations.

The Romans, who regularly eulogized their ancestors, had a more ambivalent attitude toward homosexual behavior. They also savored the eccentricities and scandals that might be associated with it. Such gossipy preoccupations come to the fore in *Tacitus' Annals* and *Histories*,

arranged around the lives of emperors, and even more in *Suetonius' Lives of the Twelve Caesars*, written in the early second century, where the foibles of one Roman emperor after another are set forth with a relish that anticipates a modern supermarket scandal sheet. The most outrageous life of a homoerotic Caesar stems from the late empire: that of *Heliogabalus* (reigned 218–222), attributed to *Lampridius*, one of *Suetonius'* continuators. Oddly, the first major surviving autobiography, except for the inscription erected by Augustus Caesar, came later. In his *Confessions*, *St. Augustine* (354–430) contrasts his life before and after he became a Christian; here we see a life transformed by a shift from one set of ideals to the other. Although *Augustine* wrote his memoir after his conversion, he nonetheless saw fit to include in it an account of his deep friendship with a fellow student. His immensely popular autobiography, which long remained unique, thus preserved a moving account of special friendship that was to reverberate through the centuries.

Medieval and Modern Times. The Gospels are echoed in *Philostratus' Life of Apollonius of Tyana*, a homosexual philosopher. Biographically, the early and high medieval eras are notable for the lives of the saints. One, that of *St. Pelagius/Pelagia*, gives an account of an attempted homoerotic seduction and the saint's heroic resistance. The letters and lives of monks often attest to particular friendships, though the conventional aspect of such effusions makes it difficult to use them as direct historical evidence.

The Italian Renaissance, with its emphasis on the idea of fame, gave renewed life to the art of secular biography. In 1550, for example, *Giorgio Vasari* (1511–1574) published his monumental *Lives of the Architects, Sculptors, and Painters*, providing, in addition to serious assessments of the art works, many piquant details of the artists' personal lives. Then in 1562, the flamboyant bisexual sculptor *Benvenuto Cellini* (1500–1571),

completed his *Autobiography*. In France, Michel de Montaigne (1533–1592), though he published no autobiography as such, devoted much of his writing to introspection and to musing on the nature of his own intense male friendships.

At the end of the sixteenth century the repressive influence of the Council of Trent, coupled with the new standards of decorum dictated by literary classicism, caused self-censorship to eliminate details that would previously have been permitted. One has to wait until the *Autobiography* of Jean-Jacques Rousseau (1712–1778) for a new standard of candor and authenticity. In this account of his life, devoted to a search for the truth about himself, Rousseau describes his involvement in a youthful homosexual episode in Turin.

The Nineteenth and Twentieth Centuries. The Victorian period counts as the high water mark of prudery and censorship. Yet in this era scholars began to uncover material from the archives that had been neglected before. The *Life of Michelangelo* (1893) by the English homosexual John Addington Symonds (1840–1893), with its hints of the artist's abnormal sexuality, is an example of the fruits of this new research. At the same time, regrettably, the late nineteenth century was obsessed with a purported link between genius and insanity championed by such psychiatrists as Cesare Lombroso, leading to the popular genre of "psychopathographies," in which the torments and inadequacies of literary and artistic figures are highlighted. Related to this trend is Sigmund Freud's 1910 essay on the homosexuality of Leonardo da Vinci. Despite the expectations it awakened, psychoanalytic method did not contribute much in the ensuing decades to the deep analysis of historic figures.

The rise of the homophile movement in Germany at the turn of the century fostered a diligent scrutiny of the current production of biographies for indications of homosexuality and lesbianism.

At this time the sexual orientations of such varied figures as Helena Petrovna Blavatsky (founder of Theosophy), François de Boisrobert, Christina of Sweden, Heinrich von Kleist, August von Platen, and Walt Whitman came out of the shadows. Subsequently several of the major figures of the German Movement, including Kurt Hiller and Magnus Hirschfeld, wrote their own memoirs.

Because the trials of Oscar Wilde in 1895 mercilessly exposed the intimate details of his sexual activities, his life could not be sanitized. The first sympathetic accounts were the memoirs of friends, such as Robert Ross and André Gide. Almost a century had to pass before we got the fuller biographies of H. Montgomery Hyde and Richard Ellmann. It may be, however, that the best life of Wilde is his inadvertent autobiography, the *Letters* as edited by Rupert Hart-Davis (1962). The memoirs of Wilde's scholarly contemporary John Addington Symonds could be published only in 1985.

Twentieth-century French writers excelled in self-examination as set forth in diaries intended for publication. Best known of these works is the extensive *Journal* of André Gide (1869–1951), covering the years 1889–1949, and Marcel Jouhandeau's (1888–1979) colossal *Journaliers* in 26 volumes. Jean Cocteau (1891–1963) also wrote a number of memoirs and diaries, some of which are being published posthumously.

Michael Holroyd's full biography (1967–68) of Lytton Strachey (1880–1932) provided both candor and balanced detail; it succeeded in reviving the reputation of the subject as well as contributing to the expanding industry of Bloomsbury scholarship. Subsequently a number of large biographies have appeared on such Bloomsbury figures as Lord Keynes, E. M. Forster, and Virginia Woolf. An unusual contribution is Nigel Nicolson's *Portrait of a Marriage* (1973), treating the homosexuality of both his parents: Harold Nicolson and Vita Sackville-West. Attention

to the expatriate writers and artists of that generation in Paris has focused especially on noteworthy lesbians, including Natalie Barney, Romaine Brooks, and Gertrude Stein and Alice B. Toklas.

A distinguished recent biography of a major figure of the past is Louis Crompton's *Byron and Greek Love* (1985). Not seeking to replace other biographies of the poet, Crompton highlights the periods of Byron's known homoerotic infatuations; he also shows the problems engendered by the homophobia of his contemporaries, as well as Jeremy Bentham's efforts to argue against it. The continuing fascination with such romantic figures as William Beckford, Queen Christina of Sweden, T. E. Lawrence ("of Arabia"), and King Ludwig II of Bavaria has led to numerous biographical works, but establishing the truth tends to prove elusive. Adequate studies of the homosexuality or bisexuality of a number of kings of England and France are still lacking, though the record is somewhat better with military commanders.

The post-Stonewall gay movement after 1969 has been commemorated in a number of activist reminiscences, most of them slight. Perhaps coincidentally, Tennessee Williams decided to make a clean breast of things in his *Memoirs* (1975), while William Somerset Maugham was finally dragged completely out of the closet in the lengthy biography by Ted Morgan (1980). The homosexuality of the English dramatist Joe Orton was revealed in the lurid circumstances of his murder by his lover in London in 1967; Orton has now been profiled not only in the biography by John Lahr (1978), and in the writer's *Diaries*, but also in an explicit film, *Prick Up Your Ears* (1987), based on both these sources and directed by Stephen Frears. Needless to say, Hollywood films on the lives of public figures who were homosexual or bisexual typically black out unconventional sexual aspects. In 1986 ex-Congressman Robert Bauman published a rare example of an autobiography of a gay po-

litical figure; its existence, however, is probably owing to his public exposure.

The lives of ordinary male homosexuals and lesbians of the past are for the most part hidden from us. Representing turn of the century American life, however, are the memoirs of Claude Hartland (1901) and Ralph Werther ("Earl Lind," 1918; 1922). The four volumes of the diaries of Donald Vining cover a third of a century: 1936-75. Lesbian scholars have begun to emphasize collective records, as seen in Margaret Cruikshank, ed., *The Lesbian Path* (1980), and Julia Penelope Stanley and Susan J. Wolfe, eds., *The Coming Out Stories* (1980). A much-noticed contribution to this genre is a collection of the reflections of some fifty Catholic religious: Rosemary Curb and Nancy Manahan, eds., *Lesbian Nuns: Breaking the Silence* (1985). Mostly unpublished are the tape-recorded reminiscences of older homosexuals gathered by oral-history projects in several cities of North America; an exception is Keith Vacha's *Quiet Fire* (1985), in which older gay men tell their own story.

Research Challenges. The problems confronting any scholar who would attempt an in-depth study of the personality of a subject believed to be homosexual or lesbian are serious. Where same-sex practice is documented through autobiographies or police records, there remains the task of situating the individual's sense of self within the larger context of prevalent attitudes toward homosexuality. In many cases, however, a self-protective instinct caused the individual to lead a closeted life. In individual cases it may be hard to establish whether the subject is a deeply closeted individual, whose secrets will nonetheless emerge with determined effort, or whether contemporary gossip or later speculation has labeled someone homosexual who in fact was not. In the past some overenthusiastic researchers have, in effect, "shanghaied" historic figures for enshrinement in the homosexual pantheon.

In order to proceed with the investigation of some person of the past believed to have been homosexual, one should ascertain the presence of several of the following indicators: the subject is unmarried (even, as sometimes happens, to the point of vehemently resisting marriage); the subject belonged to a circle other members of which are known to have been gay; the subject had interests or pursuits prevalent at the time among gay people; and the subject adopted unusual turns of phrase (say the use of pronouns appropriate to the opposite sex). Once the scholar has attained familiarity with the period, a cluster of such signs triggers a bell. One need scarcely add that the absence of one of the others should not bring the investigation to a halt. Many almost exclusively homosexual figures, for example, have been married; the giveaway is the taunting phrase "the marriage was a failure."

Above and beyond these endeavors of detection, sexual orientation needs to be fitted into larger contexts that will show how it molded the individual's own personality, and in turn what are the social functions of the orientation in the host society. The task is formidable, but conscientiously pursued it will yield substantial rewards in understanding the inner life of the subject of the biography.

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BIOLOGY

See **Animal Homosexuality;**
Sociobiology.

BIRDS AND AVIAN SYMBOLISM

Human interest in birds, both wild and domestic, and study of their behavior impinge on sexual concerns in several ways. From ancient Greek times onwards, barnyard fowls have provided a ready source for the observation of behavior, including sexual acts. Principles drawn from study

of these birds have sometimes been transferred to other species, including the human. Aristotle noted homosexual behavior in fowls, and in the eighteenth century the French naturalist Georges Louis Leclerc de Buffon reported his own independent observations in birds. In the present century, the social hierarchy of the barnyard formed the starting point for the concept of the pecking order in psychology.

In 1977 a considerable stir took place in the American media over the reports by George and Molly Hunt (University of California, Irvine) of female-female pairs of gulls. As early as 1885 a female-female swan pair had been reported from England, and there is now documentation of preferential same-sex patterns among a number of species of birds living in the wild.

Birds figure in erotic metaphor and symbolism in a variety of ways. In contemporary North America the term "chicken" circulates among pederasts to denote an attractive teenage boy. This usage should not be confused with the clipped form "chick"—occasionally found in older sources in the full form, "chicken" showing the origin—meaning woman. The general derivation from slang *chicken* = child is clear (attested from the eighteenth century onwards). The homoerotic sense may be traced back as far as the late nineteenth century: "The Affection which a sailor will lavish on a ship's boy to whom he takes a fancy, and makes his 'chicken,' as the phrase is." (*Congressional Record*, April 21, 1890). In another bird metaphor, the pursuer of adolescents is called the *chicken hawk* in today's street language.

Curiously, this semantic development had a forerunner in Latin, where *pullus*, chicken, was a general term of endearment, especially for handsome boys. *Pullarius* (literally "poulterer") meant a "kidnapper of boys" or "boy stealer"; more generally it signified "pederast."

The male fowl, the *cock*, has provided a slang term for penis, by way of