

young generation a heady sense of imminent revolution.

Discarding (or so they believed) the judgmental hangups of their elders, many counterculture recruits became sexually experimental, willing to try homosexual activity a time or two "for kicks," even if they were predominantly heterosexual. Massive arrests for marijuana possession created a new understanding for the plight of others—sexual nonconformists—who were being persecuted by victimless crime laws. The psychiatrist Thomas Szasz and others correctly perceived the link between the campaign to decriminalize marijuana and the efforts to reform sex laws.

Because the gay movement became visible only in 1969 after the **Stone-wall Rebellion**—at the crest of the counterculture wave, many assumed that homosexuals were essentially counterculturalist, leftist, and opposed root and branch to the established order. Subsequent observation has shown, not surprisingly perhaps, that a majority of gay men and lesbians were (and are) liberal-reformist and even conservative, rather than revolutionary in their overall political and social outlook. Nonetheless, the counterculture fostered a mood of defiant unconventionality that made possible a quantum leap from a score of timid, semi-clandestine organizations to a national movement that openly challenged one of the most deep-seated taboos in Western civilization. It left its mark on the gay lifestyle in terms of dress and music, use of hippie expressions and street talk, the diffusion of at least a nominal communitarian ideal, an eagerness to question the shibboleths of the establishment, a lessening of guilt, and (for gay men at least) a more open acknowledgment of the legitimacy of "promiscuity" or sexual pluralism. Significantly, while the AIDS crisis of the 1980s has caused a reexamination of some precepts of sexual freedom, other counterculture lifestyle traits have persisted, albeit overlaid by new trends to-

ward elite consumerism and career professionalism.

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### ✓ COUPERUS, LOUIS (1863–1923)

Dutch novelist. Couperus was born in The Hague to a family of leading colonial administrators. For a decade of his youth he lived in the capital of the Dutch East Indies, Batavia (now Jakarta). It made a strong impression on the boy, who was to become famous because of his novels about society life in Indonesia and The Hague. Young Couperus was not the manly youngster destined for the administration of the Dutch colonies his parents would have preferred, but was frail and feminine. In the circle of the women of his family he was beloved, and later he married one of his cousins.

He started writing poetry in a delicate style which was not very successful. By contrast his first novel, *Eline Vere* (1889), stood out. It was naturalist with a decadent theme: the sensuous woman. In his semi-autobiography, *Metamorfoze* (1897), he stated that Eline was a self-portrait. His second novel, *Noodlot* (1891, *Destiny*), resembles Oscar Wilde's *Dorian Gray* of the same year (translated into Dutch by Couperus' wife). Bertie, a weakling, and Frank, a straight man, are friends, but to Bertie the friendship is love. When Frank gets acquainted with a young woman and is on the verge of marriage, Bertie sabotages the arrangement with a forged letter. When he admits this many years later, Frank kills him. After his release from prison, Frank meets his fiancée again; they wed, but their marriage is doomed to unhappiness, and they commit a double suicide. The third novel, *Extaze* (1893), has a homoerotic undertone which continued in subsequent works.

From 1900 onwards, Couperus wrote classical novels such as *Dionyzos* (1904) and his most gay *De berg van licht* [Mountain of Light] (1905–06), on the androgynous, bisexual Roman emperor **Heliogabalus**. Eastern decadence is shown to corrupt western morals. In the struggle of east and west, of female sensuousness and male rigidity, Couperus favors the sensual perspective. For his interpretation of Heliogabalus, Couperus made use of L.S.A.M. von Römer's work on homosexuality and androgyny. Critics came down hard on this book. For many years Couperus wrote no further novels; he considered writing a pamphlet on the critics' attitudes toward homosexuality, but did not do so. His later novels *De komedianten* (1917), on two Roman boy actors, and *Iskander* (1920), on Alexander the Great, also had strong homoerotic undertones.

Before World War I, Couperus lived mostly in Nice and Italy because of his dislike of the northern European climate. Returning to The Hague in 1914, he became a successful lecturer, although the press considered him too much the dandy. Most of his books sold well, with the exception of *De berg van licht*, which today is considered one of his best.

When Couperus died in 1923, he was probably a virgin, as his decadent successor Gerard Reve maintains.

Couperus was the foremost Dutch novelist of the turn of the century. In 1987, a new critical edition of his complete works began to appear.

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## COUPLES

The familiar term "couple" here denotes two persons, not closely related by blood, usually but not always living together, forming an ongoing sexual partnership, whether married or unmarried, heterosexual or homosexual. It serves to

efface the older sharp distinction between fornication and matrimony, thereby fostering a more objective scrutiny of human relationships. Because this conceptual change is recent, serious research in the field is not far advanced; unfounded stereotypes linger, and generalizations based on present knowledge may in time be superseded.

*Role Models.* Intensely devoted same-sex couples who have been taken as inspirational models include **Gilgamesh** and **Enkidu**, **Damon** and **Pythias**, **Achilles** and **Patroklos**, **David** and **Jonathan**, **Jesus** and the **Beloved Disciple**, **Han Ai-ti** and **Dong Xian**, **Hadrian** and **Antinous**, **Gertrude Stein** and **Alice B. Toklas**, **Christopher Isherwood** and **Donald Bachardy**. The sexuality in several of these relationships remains controversial, though those for whom these couples are models assume there were genital relations. In the legendary and ancient-world cases, the intensity of the loves was not challenged by the stresses of a long life together. The modern role models exemplify durability as well as intensity of same-sex love. Such models reassure lesbians and gay men that long-term relationships are possible, despite the obstacles posed by social arrangements and by social conceptions of homosexual relationships as necessarily transitory due to an essential promiscuity. Less widely known role models are influential in small communities or social circles among more recently formed couples, who look to them for advice and factors which promote durability and amicability. As such they frequently find themselves in leadership positions in the social clique to which they belong.

*Pressures Against Coupling.* Homophobes and the Roman Catholic Church have regarded homosexual relationships as more serious (sinful, neurotic) than fleeting anonymous sexual encounters, because a relationship entails greater acceptance of homosexuality—"living in sin" rather than distinct "sinful acts." As John De Cecco observed, "That two men