

Crevel put great hopes in the Association of Revolutionary Artists and Writers. The Stalinist iron of socialist realism, however, shattered the effort to reconcile revolutionary art and politics. At the Congress meeting in Paris in 1935, a Russian poet denounced the surrealists as pederasts; André Breton, the pope of surrealism, expelled Crevel from his circle for being a homosexual; Crevel put his head in a Paris oven and expired in the arms of Salvador Dali.

In his sexual life, René faced equally great contradictions. He had a passionate love affair with Eugene MacCown, an expatriate American painter, of whom Crevel wrote, "He was sent to punish me by the people I have hurt." Crevel celebrated the promiscuous homosexuality of working class bars, parks, quays, and the back alleys of Paris—what he called an "anonymous continent." At the same time he was jealous when his lover turned from him to a tattooed hustler. He nonetheless believed that every erotic activity was subversive which rebelled against "the reproductive instincts."

An example of the political sexual contradictions Crevel faced can be seen in the matter of Louis Aragon (himself a closet pedophile), arrested after he published a revolutionary poem, "Front Rouge" (Red Front) (1931), celebrating communism. Confronted by Crevel, André Gide refused to sign a petition against Aragon's arrest. Gide responded, "When I published *Corydon*, I was prepared to go to prison. Ideas are no less threatening than actions. We are dangerous people. To be convicted under this government would be an honor. However, if Aragon were convicted, he would deserve prison no less than Maurras" (a fascist). Gide talked of working behind the scenes; Crevel called for public protest against great infamy.

René Crevel's obscurity in the English-speaking world arises from multiple causes. Because he was a Trotskyist, the communists have suspected him; because he was an outspoken homosex-

ual, the surrealists have avoided him; because he was a communist, academics have red-listed him; because he celebrated promiscuity, gay liberationists have neglected him. His works have recently been reprinted; two of his sex novels have been translated into English, and gay liberation publications (*Masques*, *Christopher Street*, and Boston's *Gay Community News*) have devoted critical attention to his work. What his closest friend Salvador Dali wrote in 1954 remains true: "René Crevel offers a new bombshell in the genre of confrontation."

Charley Shively

CRIMINAL LAW AMENDMENT ACT

This was an act of the British Parliament (48 & 49 Victoria c. 69) which in its eleventh clause provided a term of imprisonment not exceeding two years, with or without hard labor, for any male person guilty of an act of gross indecency with another male person in public or in private. This clause had been introduced into a bill directed against prostitution and white slavery by Henry Labouchere late on the night of August 6, 1885. Accepted without debate, the clause became part of a bill that was rushed through the third reading the following night, August 7, and passed.

Under the existing Offenses against the Person Act of 1861 (24 & 25 Victoria cap. 100) only buggery = anal intercourse was punishable in English law, though in 1828 Sir Robert Peel in his reform measures had made "any penetration, however slight" sufficient for conviction, contrary to the earlier holding of the courts that proof of penetration and emission was required. The effect of the new statute was that any and every form of male homosexual expression, if only "filthy and disgusting" enough to offend the feelings of a jury, became criminal. It was under this law that Oscar Wilde was convicted in May 1895, spending a full two

years in Reading Prison and being socially disgraced and ruined as well. Not until 1957 did the **Wolfenden** Committee recommend repeal of this statute, which had inspired many similar innovations in the penal codes of other jurisdictions in the English-speaking world. Even at the time, when the first articles on homosexuality were appearing in the psychiatric press in the wake of appeals by homosexual apologists for toleration, the law was a retrograde measure. But it was part of the "moral purity" trend of the time in which Victorian humanitarianism interacted with Victorian prudery to put a new set of statutes on the lawbooks to enable the police to combat "vice and immorality" in which women and children were often the exploited victims. The law, dubbed the "blackmailer's charter," cast the shadow of criminality over British homosexual life until its repeal in 1967—82 years after its enactment.

BIBLIOGRAPHY. F. B. Smith, "Labouchere's Amendment to the Criminal Law Amendment Bill," *Historical Studies*, 17 (1976), 165-175.

CROSS-DRESSING

See **Transvestism**.

CROWLEY, ALEISTER (1875-1947)

English writer and occultist. By his own account, as an adolescent he was initiated into homosexual practices by a clergyman. As a wealthy undergraduate at Trinity College, Cambridge, Crowley—who had changed his given name(s) from Edward Alexander to Aleister in order to have the metrical value of a dactyl followed by a spondee—had his first book published at his own expense [*Aceldema, or a Place to Bury Strangers in: A Philosophical Poem*, London, 1898]. In another book of the same year, *White Stains*, he extolled the joys of pederasty in verse. During this period he announced that "he

wished to get into contact with the devil." Crowley's occult interests took a quantum leap with his participation in 1898-1900 in the Order of the Golden Dawn, an offshoot of Theosophy. Under the tutelage of several members of the order he became adept in "Ceremonial Magick." In London he established himself in a flat in Chancery Lane, styling himself Count Vladimir Svareff. Two rooms of the apartment became temples dedicated respectively to the twin pillars of Light and Dark.

After the turn of the century Crowley's public career began, and he was regularly attacked in the press as "The Great Beast" and "The Wickedest Man in the World." In 1904 Crowley was visited—so he claimed—by his Holy Guardian Angel, Aiwass, who dictated to him *The Book of the Law*, which became the charter for his later activities. Among its precepts are "The word of Sin is Restriction" and "There is no law beyond Do what thou wilt." In a 1910 memoir he proclaimed, "I shall fight openly for that which no Englishman dare defend, even in secret—sodomy! At school I was taught to admire Plato and Aristotle, who recommend sodomy to youths. I am not so rebellious as to oppose their dictum; and in truth there seems to be no better way to avoid the contamination of woman and the morose pleasures of solitary vice."

In the United States during World War I he experimented with the mind-altering properties of mescaline. He then established a kind of commune or Abbey at Cefalù in Sicily, where (in 1921) he advanced beyond the grade of Magus to the supreme status of Ipsissimus. His earlier misogyny notwithstanding, the abbey also sheltered two mistresses and their children, placing a severe strain on Crowley's finances. He also had a male lover, the poet Victor Neuburg, whom he dominated ruthlessly. With the dissolution of the Abbey in 1929, he began to publish the volumes of his "autohagiography," the final text of which was not issued until