OBESITY

From ancient Egyptian times onwards the appearance of being well nourished, extending to what we would call overweight, has been a sign of power and wealth. Through gargantuan feats at the table such kings as Louis VI of France and Henry VIII of England turned themselves into mountains of flesh. By contrast thinness tended to connote poverty or neurasthenia. In the nineteenth century, as food supplies became more regular and plentiful, poor people could become fat, and in consequence the rich began to prize thinness. Standards of ideal weight are therefore culturally conditioned.

In our society women are bombarded with advertising and exhortations to maintain their attractiveness by keeping thin, and fashions are designed to suit those who succeed. Predictably, some overdo it and become anorexic. While men too are enjoined to keep trim, many fail to achieve the ideal. Gay men are more successful in this struggle than straight men, and the styles they favor tend to show off slender bodies. Yet even within the overall "thinist" aesthetic there are variations. In the 1960s and early '70s an almost emaciated look prevailed, promoted by the counterculture and no doubt conditioned by appetite-suppressing drugs. With the increasing popularity of gymnasia, however, gay men began to admire a more hefty look, though one characterized by muscle rather than fat.

At the turn of the century some researchers believed that homosexual men, being in their view a third sex, tended to have broad hips. This assumption has not been statistically confirmed. More generally the German psychiatrist Ernst Kretschmer (1888–1964) believed that a person's temperamental reaction patterns reflected physiological type, with heavy-set persons behaving in one way and slender ones another. These theories too have not found general acceptance.

On average gay men tend to be more prejudiced against obesity in their sexual partners than women, whether straight or lesbian. The sexual advertisements of gay papers teem with the admonition: "no fats." Still, there are a few individuals, known as chubby chasers, who admire what most reject, typically preferring partners who are over 300 pounds. People of these two complementary persuasions, the chubbies and their chasers, join Girth and Mirth clubs. In Japan travelers find that "well padded" older men are in considerably greater demand among homosexuals than in Western countries, a difference that tends to confirm the culturally determined character of the preference.

Wayne R. Dynes

OBJECTIFICATION, SEXUAL

This expression, which became popular only in the 1970s, denotes an attitude of treating others as mere vehicles for sensual or ego gratification—or simply as sexual partners—rather than as full human beings deserving of equality of respect. An individual who is so treated is a sex object. These terms were spread by adherents of the women's movement, who sometimes refer the phenomenon to a mental pattern which they term objectivism, the unwarranted assumption that male (or patriarchal) values are simply
OBJECTIFICATION, SEXUAL

objective reality, rather than cultural constructs imposed upon it.

However this may be, the concept has been adopted by some sectors of the gay movement as a tool for internal criticism. In bars and other places where encounters are intended to lead to sexual contact, the treatment of other individuals as sex objects may be said to be reasonable and expected. But where this procedure passes over into business or political activity, to the point that articulate and persuasive individuals who do not happen to be goodlooking are ignored or passed over in favor of men who are “cute,” this seems a waste of human resources as well a source of unhappiness to those who are the victims of it. Some critics of the pattern have proposed the alternative term looksism as a more convenient descriptor. A similar phenomenon, known as agelism, works to the disadvantage of older gay people. This overemphasis on sexual attractiveness is to some extent explainable by the fact that gays as a group are united only by their sexual preference, and by the fact that they have been stigmatized by the host society because of it. Still, to the degree that it is prevalent in gay male circles—less so in lesbian ones—it may serve to bolster stereotypes that gay people are superficial and frivolous.

The concept of sexual objectification has been traced to the German philosopher Immanuel Kant (1726–1804), who in his Lectures on Ethics presented the sexual act as the mere manipulation of an object by a subject, in effect masturbation à deux—unless the relationship is redeemed by the altruism of marriage. In the twentieth century, the notion of objectification has been widely diffused by Freudian psychoanalysis, where object may be defined in three ways: (1) the goal toward which the organism’s instincts or drives are directed, be it a person, a thing, or a fantasy; (2) the focus of love or hate; and (3) that which the subject perceives and knows, in keeping with the traditional philosophy of knowledge. This analysis has the advantage of showing that confusion has been caused by conflating the neutral sense (3)—from which it follows that the very process of cognition continually and inescapably enmeshes one in subject–object relations, without thereby imposing any distorting or reductive effect—with (1) and (2), which entail a charge of emotion suffusing the object so as to enhance or demean it. Moreover, the everyday sense of the word object suggests a tendency to turn persons into things, though this is in no way required by sense (3).

While the existing terminology is not ideal, it must be conceded that the psychosocial phenomenon of sexual objectification exists, and that when it is allowed to intrude into all sorts of spheres of human activity where it is in fact dysfunctional, it may stifle the personal development of those who are subjected to it. At the same time, it is necessary to recognize that sexual selection is indeed selection, and human beings are unlikely to free themselves from this component of their phylogenetic legacy, or the ongoing physiological processes that underlie such selection. Thus the ideal of treating human beings in terms of equality of respect, discarding inappropriate sexual objectification, should be inculcated and promoted, but one should harbor no illusions about the immanence of its universal realization. This tension is one of the many complications of civilization itself.

Wayne R. Dynes

O’HARA, FRANK (1926–1966)

American poet and art critic. Raised in Worcester, Massachusetts, O’Hara served in the Navy from 1944 to 1946, and then attended Harvard and Michigan Universities. The most important experiences during his college years were probably his visits to New York, where he met a number of poets, as well as painters of the rising Abstract Expression-
ist school. He settled in New York in 1951, working for the Museum of Modern Art, where he organized exhibitions of contemporary art. O'Hara wrote books of art criticism (Jackson Pollock, 1959; Robert Motherwell, 1965), and also sought the collaboration of artists in his own creative endeavors. He believed that the support of painters in particular was useful to him in escaping the suffocation of the reigning academic tradition in poetry.

His plays, which were often produced in avant-garde theatres, included Love’s Labour, Awake in Spain!, and The Houses at Fallen Hanging. He published only six small collections of poems; others were found only in letters to friends or written on a hoarded scrap of paper. During his lifetime, however, O'Hara enjoyed an extensive word-of-mouth reputation, and his inclusion in anthologies began to bring him to a wider audience. On the morning of July 24, 1966, he was accidentally struck by a beach buggy on Fire Island, the gay resort where he spent his summers, and died shortly thereafter.

Like his older contemporary Wallace Stevens, O'Hara was influenced by the French avant-garde poets; indeed his relation to his favorite poets recalls that of Guillaume Apollinaire and the Cubists. Yet O'Hara tempered his mandarin sources of inspiration with eclectic infusions of popular culture and the kaleidoscope of the New York scene. His use of everyday-speech rhythms recalls the beat cult of spontaneity. Less observed by many critics is the fact that many of his poems are sophisticated transcriptions of the bantering “queens' talk” common among gay men at the time. After his death O’Hara’s work did much to free American poetry from the domination of a fading academic tradition. At the same time however, his fondness for ephemeral, campy, and trivial motifs restricted the scope of all but a few poems.


Ward Houser

OLD TESTAMENT

This conventional term is the Christian name for the Hebrew Bible, which the Church incorporated into its own scriptural canon. The New Testament constitutes the additional scriptures of Christianity, and some churches supplement the Hebrew Bible with the Deuterocanonical (or Apocryphal) books. Jewish tradition divides the Old Testament into three parts: the Law (the first five books ascribed to Moses), the Prophets (most of the historical books and all of the prophetic writings except Daniel), and the Writings (all the other books including Daniel). For Jews it is the first five books, the Torah, that are authoritative; and in the third of these the death penalty is explicitly prescribed for male homosexuality (Leviticus 18:22 and 20:13). Although there is scant evidence for the actual enforcement of this law by Jewish courts, it is known that in later Christendom it cost the lives of thousands of homosexual men from the later Middle Ages to modern times.

Negative Texts. The Old Testament itself is an intricate body of literature, varied and complex; each of the literary units is a product of its own time and place, and a great deal of it is not easily understood without extensive delving into the languages and cultures of the principal nations of the ancient Near East that influenced the nascent monotheism of Israel and the later Jewish community in the Persian Empire. Genesis, the opening book, contains in chapters 18 and 19 the infamous story of Sodom. This narrative never actually says that the Cities of the Plain were destroyed because of homosexuality, but indicates that their sins “cried to heaven for vengeance.” In the story the male inhabitants of Sodom are shown attempting to commit gang rape on two
visitors who have taken shelter in the house of Lot, and the Biblical tradition made Sodom proverbial for its inhospitality and injustice toward strangers. For most cultures of the ancient world, according to the surviving sources, consensual homosexual activity entailed no stigma or penalty; the subject rarely finds mention unless prominent persons or extraordinary circumstances are involved. And even in such circumstances the homosexual element is not deemed worthy of emphatic mention. For example, a midrashic source tells us that Joseph in Egypt was bought by Potiphar for pederastic purposes [cf. Genesis 37:36 and 39:1]. The New English Bible translation finds this theme explicit in the text itself, but other versions ignore it.

The outrage at Gibeah [Judges 19–21] begins, it is true, with an attempt at homosexual gang rape but is diverted into a heterosexual one in which the Levite’s concubine is violated and killed. The outcome is a tribal war against the Benjaminites, who are overwhelmed and massacred. Two curious episodes in Genesis merit discussion. First, there is the epilogue to the Deluge narrative in which Ham “saw the nakedness of his father” [Genesis 9:22], an action interpreted in the Talmud as an assault on Noah’s masculinity. The second is the scene in which Sarah encounters Ishmael “playing with Isaac her son” [Septuagint of Genesis 21:9], with overtones of a homosexual initiation rite. Both have puzzled or eluded modern commentators who cannot admit the overt aspects of male–male sexuality in cultures of antiquity.

Positive Figures. That Naomi and Ruth had a lesbian love affair has been, improbably, derived from the text by some [e.g., Jeannette Foster in Sex Variant Women in Literature, new ed., Baltimore, 1975], and the surmise that David and Jonathan had not merely a strong friendship but a homosexual liaison has long been popular. While it is true that Naomi and Ruth make one of the strongest declarations of fidelity ever written [Ruth 1:16–17], not much else attests the claim, since the purpose of the narrative is to authorize the acceptance of converts into the “house of Israel.” In the case of the men there is more evidence. The book of Samuel relates that “Jonathan and David made a covenant because he [Jonathan] loved him as his own soul. And Jonathan stripped himself of the robe that was upon him and gave it to David, and his garments even to his sword, and to his bow, and to his belt” [1 Samuel 18:3–4]. From other Eastern Mediterranean heroic love affairs armor is known as a pledge of affection from the more important member of the duo to the lesser. Jonathan often speaks of his concern for David, and there is a scene of intense emotion and probably sexual release between them. After Jonathan’s death David sings in his lament that Jonathan’s love for him “was wonderful, passing the love of women” [II Samuel 1:26].

Modern Westerners tend to view homosexuality in other times and places in the light of the way in which it has been understood (or misunderstood) in their own culture. The Israeli anthropologist Raphael Patai cautions against such an approach, arguing that “male homosexuality was rampant in Biblical times and has so remained in the Middle East down to the present day. It may not have been as general as it was in Greece, but the folk mores certainly did not regard it with any degree of disapproval.”

References to men in the ancient world who engaged in homosexual activity may generally be assigned to three categories. First of all, there was the military or virile type; such men usually bonded with another, similar male: examples are Gilgamesh and Enkidu, Achilles and Patroclus, and David and Jonathan. A second group of references mention the passive-efeminate male who took the “female” role in sexual intercourse. Such men might wear women’s clothes; they might engage in sacral prostitution [the kādēš] or its commercial counterpart. Other texts
mention a type of male, a third type, who patronized the second category described above.

Cultic Prostitution. Difficult for the modern religious consciousness to understand is that male cult prostitutes, specifically homosexual prostitutes, with both erotic and mantic functions, were part of the religious life of Syria and Palestine, including pre-exilic Israel (i.e., from about 1200 to 587 B.C.). References to their activity are found in I Kings 14:24, 15:12, 22:46, II Kings 21:2, 21:11, 23:7, the Septuagint of II Chronicles 35:19a, Isaiah 2:6 and Job 36:14, as well as in place names such as "En-mishpat [Spring of Judgment], which is Kadesh" (Genesis 14:7). The references in Kings cover a period of some 400 years, so that the custom survived down to the reforms of King Josiah. Ten years after his death the Temple was destroyed and the Jews were carried off into captivity in Babylon. (See also Kadesh Barnea.)

Later Prohibitions. Under Persian rule (beginning in 538 B.C.) the Jewish community reestablished itself in Palestine. The Persians proved more tolerant than previous conquerors, allowing the Jews and other subject peoples to run their own affairs, but they did not tolerate homosexuality. In the Persian period the male cult prostitutes no longer functioned in the rebuilt Temple in Jerusalem or in the province of Judea. There is good reason to assume that at this time—under the influence of Zoroastrianism—the verses Leviticus 18:22 and 20:13 were added to the Holiness Code of Leviticus 12–20, forbidding male homosexuality under pain of death.

All forms of male homosexual behavior were odious to later Jewish religious thinkers and apologists, both those who wrote in Hebrew or Aramaic and those, such as Philo and Josephus, who were Hellenized and composed their works in Greek. Persian rule ended with the capture of Jerusalem by Alexander the Great in 333; but the Greek rulers who followed him (except for Antiochus Epiphanes in the brief period from 168–63) and the Romans in later times allowed the Jews to enforce the norms of their own cult. Hence the Levitical laws stood and became an integral part of the Judaic moral code.

There may be an allusion to the homosexual aspect of the slave trade in Joel 3:2, to homosexual rape in Lamentations 5:13 (cf. St. Jerome's version), and in other passages that have been claimed as relevant. It is safe to conclude that by the end of the Persian period Judaism officially reproved all expressions of male–male sexuality. Although it might be argued that some distinctly modern forms of homosexuality, including androphiilia, were not an issue in Old Testament times, one has no grounds to assume that they would be regarded as permissible.


Tom Horner and Ward Houser

OLYMPIC GAMES

For over 1000 years, the Olympic games helped mold a common Hellenic outlook linking sports and religion with the art of the great temples and statues that adorned the precincts of Olympia in the northwestern Peloponnesus.

The Olympic Games in honor of Zeus, traditionally founded in 776 B.C., were held every four years thereafter. Eusebius of Caesarea preserved Julius Africanus' list of winners from the founding to A.D. 217. It was probably the tyrant Phaidon of Argos in the seventh century who, seizing the site from the Eleians (who Plato in the Symposium claimed practiced pederasty in a more uninhibited physical manner than did other Greeks), reorganized the games from one-day contests in
track or wrestling to include chariot and horse races ("racing" in the modern sense). However, the competition between runners on foot always remained central to the games. Between 720 and 576, 46 of the 81 known Olympic winners were Spartans, but Athenian, Sicilian, and Italian Greeks as well as ones from elsewhere figure on the lists. After 472 the games lasted for five days, the boys' games (the "junior competitions") falling on the third day. Cities nobly rewarded the victors with expensive prizes, at Athens equaling several years' pay for a common worker, and pensions. They became heroes, they won political power and fame, and the games in some ways resembled beauty contests. Some victors even received divine statues after death.

All these games honored gods portrayed as pederastic from 600 B.C. The legendary aition (cause) of the games was a wrestling match between Heracles and Iolaus, which may be a parallel of the story of Jacob wrestling with the angel in Genesis 32:24–32—possible evidence for the origin of the contests in a northwest Semitic athletic tradition. Games were held by the Phrygians and by the Homeric heroes where they pulled each other down by the belt in wrestling—proving that they competed while clothed. Elsewhere men and boys competed in the nude and women were unequivocally barred from attendance, even as spectators. It was, however, a myth that Orisippus of Megara, a runner in the twentieth Olympiad in 720 B.C., accidentally lost his tunic and thus introduced nudity; it was imported from Crete ca. 600 B.C. Once an erastes (senior lover) rushed up to embrace his bloodied teenaged eromenos (beloved), who had emerged victor in the pankrateia, a sort of free-style boxing match and roughest of the five main competitions.

The Olympics were more prestigious than their competitors. The Isthmian Games, where wreaths of cedar leaves were the prize, held every four years at Corinth in honor of Poseidon, owed their origin to a mythical founding by Sisyphus, king of Corinth, or alternatively by Theseus. The Pythian games honored Apollo at Delphi every eight years until the Amphycyonic Council reorganized them in 582 B.C., to be celebrated in the third year of each Olympiad, with crowns of bay leaves—later apples—as the award (with musical competitions still enjoying greater prestige than the equestrian and athletic contests modeled on the Olympic games, which were added). The Nemean games became pan-Hellenic in 573 B.C. and were eventually managed by Argos on the same lines as at Olympia, the prize being a crown of wild celery. Other contests included kissing matches held by the boys at Megara and endurance of flogging at the altar of Artemis Orthia in Sparta (in which some boys actually died), which became a tourist attraction in Roman times. Pindar's odes celebrated victors in the Olympic, Pythian, and Isthmian games.

Archaic tyrants competed avidly for prizes, usually in the expensive chariot races, which could be compared to modern trotting races, Dionysius and Agathon of Syracuse being among the victors.

Women's athletic contests were likely more widespread than indicated in the exclusively male sources that have survived. In cultic contests they raced on foot. At Olympia a women's festival honored Hera, parallel to the games for her husband Zeus, with victors receiving an olive crown. The male victors were awarded parts of the animal sacrificed. These may have sprung from races connected with marriage as in the myth of the swift Atalanta who would consent to marry only the man who could outrun her, or of King Oenomaus who forced suitors to race for the hand of his daughter, won by Pelops, beloved of Heracles and buried at Olympia. But in all sports, male or female, the Greeks competed most aggressively to win, not to overturn records, which with their poor means of timekeeping they could not measure as do modern referees. Nor did they compete to win for their team, as
teamwork was foreign to sports at the time and applied only to dance and to the military.

After triumphing under Theodosius, Christians insisted that the religious rites integral to the Olympic games be suspended in 393–94, though the games may have continued until the middle of the fifth century.

The Olympic games, now worldwide, were revived in 1896 at Athens. They bear the impress of modern athletic traditions: the mass physical training of the Turnverein in Germany and the Sokol in the Czech lands, and the aristocratic ideal of the sportsman and gentleman cultivated on the playing fields of the British public schools during the previous hundred years.

The Gay Games of the 1980s were denied use of the term Olympic by United States courts responding to a suit of the American Olympic Committee. Classical scholars remain reticent about the homoerotic aspects of the ancient games. Sansone’s theory that athletics and theatre, which involved masks like those primitive hunters wore, and males taking female parts, arose exclusively from primitive sacrifice and self-enhancing rituals, can no more be contested than the hypothesis of Indo-European initiatory pedrasty.


William A. Percy

ONE, INC.
The oldest surviving homosexual organization in North America began in Los Angeles as a monthly magazine in January 1953. Although formally independent of the Mattachine Society, most of the early staffers were members of that recently formed organization. In 1958 the magazine won a landmark legal victory when the United States Supreme Court overturned a decision by the postmaster of Los Angeles that made the periodical unmailable. This success opened the way for the present profusion of the gay and lesbian press.

In the course of time, ONE developed other activities. Responding to a need for public education, the group held small classes beginning in 1956, supplemented by the midwinter institutes which took place in January. A research facility began to take shape in the Baker Memorial Library. Early in the history of ONE it was realized that there was need for a new comprehensive bibliography of the whole interdisciplinary field of homosexual behavior. After many delays, this goal was finally achieved in the Annotated Bibliography of Homosexuality (2 vols., New York, 1976), which remains the largest work of its kind.

In 1965 the organization was split by a schism, leading to the secession of a number of members, who formed the Tangents group, later known as the Homosexual Information Center (Hollywood). Under the vigorous leadership of W. Dorr Legg, the original group successfully rebuilt itself, though ONE Magazine itself was a casualty of the dispute, publishing its last regular issues in 1968. The magazine was replaced for a time by ONE Institute Quarterly of Homophile Studies (1968–73), the first scholarly journal of its kind in North America.

In 1981 the state of California granted ONE, Inc. the right to operate as an accredited graduate school. A regular program of classes and student supervision was begun with the collaboration of a number of leading scholars. In due course several students earned the degree of Ph.D. in homophile studies. In spacious new quarters ONE Institute continues to host...
a variety of scholarly and community activities in Los Angeles.  

Ward Houser

OPERA

A composite art fusing words, music, and stagecraft, opera has flourished for five centuries. Although the lavish support the medium requires has, until recently, placed limits on overt representation of variant sexuality, careful scrutiny reveals significant homoerotic aspects.

Origins. Opera began in late Renaissance Italy with Jacopo Peri’s Dafne (1597) and Euridice (1600), and homosexual themes and characters initially appeared during the form’s first half-century or so of existence. In director Gerald Freedman’s 1973 New York City Opera production of Claudio Monteverdi’s L’Incoronazione di Poppea (1642), concerning the marriage of the bisexual first-century Roman emperor Nero to his mistress, Poppea Sabina, the erotic nature of Nero’s relationship with the poet Marcus Annaeus Lucanus—called Lucano in the libretto—was made explicit. In Pier Francesco Cavalli’s La Calisto (1651), Jove, the supreme Roman deity, must disguise himself as Diana, goddess of the moon and the hunt, in order to seduce the nymph Calisto. Among the musicians of the seventeenth century, Jean-Baptiste Lully (1632–1687), court music master to King Louis XIV of France and composer of 20 operas, was homosexual. The poet Pietro Metastasio (1698–1782), the greatest librettist of the Baroque period, was erotically linked to several men of his day.

In her study Sex Variant Women in Literature (1956), Jeannette Foster characterized the heroic Bradamante in Ludovico Ariosto’s epic Orlando Furioso (1531) as a “young Amazon in full armor” who finds, between martial exploits, that she attracts female admirers. In George Frideric Handel’s Alcina (1735), Bradamante’s loving champion is the eponymous enchantress’ sister Morgana, who remains unaware until the last act of her beloved’s actual sex.

In 1974, Dominique Fernandez wrote a novel entitled Porporino, ou les mystères de Naples, about Italian castrati, many neutered as boys in order to preserve the treble timbres of their singing voices, and drawing on historical fact, depicting them as having heterosexual and homosexual relationships. In 1979, the French Aix Festival presented a staged Porporino using dialogue from the novel and a pastiche of arias by Alessandro Scarlatti, Giovanni Battista Pergolesi, and other eighteenth-century composers, assembled by musicologist Roger Blanchard. Countertenor James Bowman and high coloratura tenor Bruce Brewer portrayed castrati Porporino and Feliciano.

Two of Wolfgang Amadeus Mozart’s major operas concern homosexual monarchs from antiquity. Alexander the Great, the fourth-century B.C. conqueror of the Persian Empire (whose orientation is discussed in a biography by Roger Peyrefitte and in novels by Mary Renault), is a central figure in Il Re Pastore (1775). In The Twelve Caesars, the Roman historian Suetonius wrote that first-century emperor Titus, the protagonist of La Clemenza di Tito (1791), “owned troops of invents and eunuchs” and had “relations with . . . favorite boys [who] danced . . . on the stage.” The finales of both operas find the heterosexual lovers paired up while the rulers remain alone: eighteenth-century sensibilities would never have tolerated on-stage male mates for Alessandro and Tito. This situation parallels Hollywood’s development of the “harmless sissy” image for films of the 1930s and 1940s, rendering gay male characters asexual to avoid provoking public outrage. In a Salzburg intermezzo Apollo et Hyacinthus, composed when he was eleven, Mozart had approached the forbidden theme more directly, though in the Latin libretto the love of the god for the boy is in part obscured by a female interest.
Nineteenth Century. Passionate letters Ludwig van Beethoven (1770–1827) wrote to his nephew, Carl Obermayer, have led to speculation that the German composer may have been homosexual. In his only opera, Fidelio (1805), the fearless Leonore, who dons male clothing to penetrate prison walls in order to rescue her husband, Florestan, a political prisoner, attracts a female admirer, Marzelline, jailer Rocco’s daughter. When Leonore reveals her true identity to all in the finale, Marzelline bewails her choice of love object. In Otto Schenk’s 1970 Metropolitan Opera production, choristers made much homophobic merriment over Marzelline’s discomfort.

The fifteenth-century transvestite and French patron saint, Joan of Arc, was given male lovers in Giuseppe Verdi’s Giovanna d’Arco (1845) and in Russian homosexual Peter Ilyich Tchaikovsky’s The Maid of Orleans (1881), just as the Lesbian poet was in Charles Gounod’s Sapho (1851). St. Joan’s life was later dramatized in Joan (1971) by openly gay, New York-based composer and minister Al Carmines (born 1936), whose eclectic works, drawing on classical, popular, and liturgical music, are variously termed operas, oratorios, and musicals. In Joan, the martyred heroine’s story is updated to the present and relocated to New York’s East Village and Joan and the Virgin Mary are depicted as lovers.

Daniel Auber’s Gustave III ou Le Bal Masqué (1833) and Verdi’s Un Ballo in Maschera (1859) have as protagonist homosexual Swedish King Gustavus III (1746–1792), whose reign began in 1771, but stress his heterosexual amorous pursuits. Magnus Hirschfeld cited possible liaisons between the king and Adolf Fredrik Muell, Johann Aminoff, and Gustav Mauritius Armfelt, men to whom he gave the title of Count. In a production of Ballo at the Royal Opera in Stockholm (1959), director Göran Centele suggested an erotic tie between the king and the page Oscar, who is played by a soprano. In his 1972 Met production of Georges Bizet’s Carmen (1875), realized posthumously by Bodo Igesz, Centele had the smuggler Remendado played as gay on the basis of his rhapsodizing over the “distinguished” Englishmen he has seen in Gibraltar, and other passages of dialogue.

While Eugene Onegin (1879) and The Queen of Spades (1890) by Tchaikovsky show heterosexual love frustrated or in a cynical light, they offer no gay alternative. In an Opera News article (1986), American gay composer and diarist Ned Rorem contrasted Tchaikovsky, whose “homosexuality . . . was ‘realized’ though tragic,” with his compatriot Modest Mussorgsky (1839–1881) who, Rorem opined, “was homosexual . . . [but] probably unfilled.” Mussorgsky set his masterwork Boris Godunov (completed 1870, revised 1871–72) in the homosocial halls of government and the exclusively male environment of the monastery. The sole heterosexual liaison, between Marina and Dimitri, spurred by power, not love, was only added later to fulfill the Imperial Theatre’s directors’ demand that the opera have a prima donna. In Khovanshchina, on which Mussorgsky worked between 1872 and 1880 but left unfinished, the composer included gay-baiting among Prince Andrei Khovansky’s other unsavory attributes. When his abandoned fiancée Marfa prevents his pursuit of the frightened Emma, Andrei snidely wonders if Marfa is herself “inappropriately attracted” to Emma. Dignified Marfa calmly ignores his charge.

French composer Camille Saint-Saëns (1835–1921) is best known to operaphiles as the composer of Samson et Dalila (1877). In a Gay Sunshine interview, Edouard Roditi recalled that Saint-Saëns, “a notorious homosexual,” was trailed by plainclothes police bodyguards protecting him from “scandal” and harassment as he searched for sex partners. Though the Biblical spectacle and lush orchestra of Samson seem to hint at a gay sensibility, these also characterize works of the pre-
sumably heterosexual Jules Massenet and likely merely show Saint-Saëns to be typical of creative artists of his time.

A profound influence on late-Romantic and later composers was the German Richard Wagner (1813–1883). His principal patron was the homosexual King Ludwig of Bavaria (1845–1886), who had the court opera in Munich give the premieres of Tristan und Isolde (1865), Die Meistersänger von Nürnberg (1868), Das Rheingold (1869), and Die Walküre (1870), though it is questionable whether the king’s ardor was required.

Some directors of Das Rheingold have depicted as gay the gentle god Froh, who pine for his sister Freia when the giants abduct her and conjure up the rainbow bridge leading to Valhalla. Father M. Owen Lee, in Opera News (1987), and other writers have explored homoerotic themes in Parsifal (1882), concerning the youth who joins the hoinosocial society of the Knights of the Grail. In his 1985 film, director Hans Jürgen Syberberg found in Parsifal an androgynous duality and spilt his scenes between an actor and an actress.

The Earlier Twentieth Century. Wagner influenced the compositions of Dame Ethel Smyth (1858–1944), whose lesbianism is well attested. Smyth wrote six operas, one of which is the only opera by a woman ever presented by the Metropolitan Opera, Der Wald (The Forest, 1902), given two performances there in 1903. A participant in the women’s suffrage movement in England, Smyth wrote its anthem, “Shoulder to Shoulder” (1911), which has been sung by the New York City Gay Men’s Chorus. The Concise Oxford Dictionary of Opera says that Smyth’s “entertaining series of memoirs conveys considerable relish for the long struggle against suspicion of a woman who composed, and did so with a robust professionalism that took men’s breaths away.”

Ned Rorem, writing in Opera News (1978), wondered if the reticent Pelléas, protagonist of Claude Debussy’s Pelléas et Mélisande (1902), should be seen as gay and asked if the dying Marcellus, who lures him from his ailing father’s side, is more than a friend.

Wagner’s heir as preeminent German composer of his day was Richard Strauss. The earliest Strauss opera in the regular repertory is Salome (1905), a setting of the 1893 play by Irish/English homosexual writer Oscar Wilde (1854–1900). Lines of Herodias’ page, which imply his intimacy with Narraboth, Syrian captain of the Tetrarch’s guard—“He was my brother and nearer to me than a brother,” and so on—were omitted from librettist Hedwig Lachmann’s adaptation, but Herod’s observation that Narraboth “was fair to look upon” remained. Other operas based on works of Wilde include Alexander von Zemlinsky’s Der Zwerg and Eine Florenzische Tragödie, Mario Castelnuovo-Tedesco’s The Importance of Being Earnest, William Orchard’s The Picture of Dorian Gray, Hans Schaeuble’s Dorian Gray, Renzo Bossi’s L’usignuolo e la rosa, and Jaroslav Kricka’s The Gentleman in White. Wilde and the aesthetic movement were satirized in Sir William Gilbert and Sir Arthur Sullivan’s operetta Patience (1881), but without mention of his homosexuality.

In Strauss’ Elektra (1909), the outcast, rebellious heroine, who inspires the admiration and affection of one of the sole serving women, all but makes love to her timid, conformist sister Chrysothemis in her attempt to convince her to join in avenging their father, Agamemnon’s death, and some performers have made their embraces quite graphic. Created in the spirit of Mozart’s Cherubino, the pubescent pageboy in Le Nozze di Figaro, Octavian, in Der Rosenkavalier (1911), is a young nobleman played by a woman. Gender lines blur still more when, like Cherubino, this male character dons female clothes for a muse. Early productions faced censorship problems not only because the first scene finds Octavian in bed
with or in close proximity to the Marschallin, but also because both performers in this erotic scene are women.

In a 1987 German production of Austrian composer Franz Schreker's Die Gezeichneten (The Branded Ones, 1918), hedonistic Duke Adorno and his close friend Count Tanare were played as bisexual.

The homosexuality of Polish composer Karol Szymanowski [1882–1937] is well documented. His King Roger [1926] concerns a historical twelfth-century Sicilian ruler who is torn between the Apollonian, represented by the intellectuals he summons to his court, and the Dionysian, personified by an Indian shepherd who leads a wild bacchanal. Staging King Roger for the Long Beach [California] Opera in 1988, director David Alden highlighted homoerotic themes he detected there. Szymanowski's earlier opera Hagith [written 1912–13, first performed 1922] was modeled on Salome.

Austrian composer Alban Berg's Lulu, based on Frank Wedekind’s plays Earth Spirit (1895) and Pandora's Box (1901), had a posthumous premiere [1937]. Its third act, long suppressed by Helene Berg, the composer’s widow, was edited and orchestrated by Friedrich Cerha and first performed in 1979. The lesbian Countess Martha Geschwitz, who belongs to an exclusive society of women artists, has seen Lulu’s portrait en travesti as Pierrot, and invites her to attend a ball dressed in male costume. In her masochistic devotion, the countess contracts cholera in order to substitute for her adored “angel” Lulu in a prison hospital. Called mad, mannish, and unnatural by her love, the countess never loses her dignity despite the sordid circumstances into which her love leads her. She declares her determination to attend law school and fight for women's rights but soon dies, with Lulu, at the hands of Jack the Ripper. It is never made clear whether or not the countess' relationship with Lulu develops into a physical one.

The Mid- and Late Twentieth Century. French homosexual composer Francis Poulenc [1899–1963] wrote three operas. In the whimsical Les Mamelles de Tirésias [1944, first performed 1947], with a text by Guillaume Apollinaire, husband and wife exchange sexes. She grows a beard and moustache, while he gives birth to thousands of babies. In Dialogues des Carmélites [1957], after Georges Bernanos' play, set during the French Revolution in the single-sex environment of the convent, the relationship between the protagonist Blanche de la Force and young Soeur Constance is depicted as a particularly loving one. The monodrama La Voix Humaine [1959], a setting of a play from the 1930s by gay writer Jean Cocteau, consists of a woman's anguished telephone conversation with the male lover who has left her. La Voix has an air of autobiography, understandably transmogrified with an alteration of pronouns at a time when it would have been nearly impossible to gain acceptance for a dramatization of a breakup of a homosexual relationship.

Homoerotic themes, both overt and covert, figure prominently in the oeuvre of gay English composer Lord Benjamin Britten [1913–1976]. Leading roles in most of his works were created by his long-time lover, Sir Peter Pears [1910–1986], one of the few opera singers to come out publicly during his lifetime. A number of writers, including Philip Brett—author of the Cambridge opera handbook Benjamin Britten: Peter Grimes [1983] and subject of an extensive Christopher Street magazine interview by Lawrence Mass [1987]—have probed the parallel between the composer's emphatic portrayals of oppressed and ostracized individuals and his own experience as a gay man living and writing in a hostile, repressive society.

In Britten's Peter Grimes [1945], based on George Crabbe's poem "The Borough" [1810], the protagonist, sensitive, poetic and deeply troubled beneath his gruff fisherman's exterior, is shown in a brief tender moment with his boy ap-
prentice. Grimes' attachments to John and to his late predecessor William Spode are definitely obsessive, if questionably erotic. Grimes' neighbors in the small fishing village suspect him of abusing his apprentices and galvanize into a lynch mob which drives Grimes to suicide. *Billy Budd* (1951), with libretto by Eric Crozier and gay novelist E. M. Forster, after Herman Melville's *Billy Budd, Foretopman* (1924), traces the disastrous effects of the repressed attraction of two British naval officers—one irredeemably evil, whose feeling turns to jealous hatred, the other good, but dutybound—for the handsome sailor Billy, who is falsely accused of inciting mutiny.

In *The Turn of the Screw* (1954), based on Henry James' 1898 novella, the ghostly servant Peter Quint, who "made free" with young Miles while living, continues to exert influence over the boy from beyond the grave, as the late governess, Miss Jessel, does over her former charge, Miles' sister Flora.

Britten's church parable *Curlew River* (1964), which incorporates elements of the Japanese No: style, includes the first serious female role in Western music drama composed for male voice in modern times, that of the madwoman. (Stephen Sondheim wrote additional such parts in his 1976 opus about Japan, *Pacific Overtures*.)

*Death in Venice* (1973), which Britten based on Thomas Mann's 1913 novella, concerns the struggle of the intellectual novelist Gustav von Aschenbach with his erotic awakening, inspired by the ethereal youth Tadzio. The climax of the first act, preceded by a driving crescendo, is Aschenbach's realization and declaration, "I love you."

Slightly outside the realm of opera, but sometimes staged by opera companies, Carl Orff's scenic cantata *Catulli Carmina* (1943) is based on sexually explicit verses by bisexual Roman poet Gaius Valerius Catullus [87-54 B.C.] and concerns his love for the bisexual Lesbia as well as their other same-sex amorous adventures.

In a *Gay Sunshine* interview, openly gay American composer Lou Harrison [born 1917] said of his colleague Virgil Thomson [born 1896] that, though he "hasn't openly declared himself, . . . his gayness is an open secret." Thomson collaborated with lesbian writer Gertrude Stein on two operas, *Four Saints in Three Acts* (1928, first performed 1934), dealing with the lives of Spanish saints, and *The Mother of Us All* (1947), which had its premiere after Stein's death and has as its subject Susan B. Anthony's long crusade for American women's suffrage. Openly gay English conductor Raymond Leppard [born 1927], who led an American bicentennial production of *The Mother* in Santa Fe, noted in a public television documentary (1977) that the relationship of Anthony and her companion Anne Howard Shaw, depicted in the opera as devoted and mutually supportive, parallels that of Stein and Alice B. Toklas [1877-1967], which he called one of the great love affairs of the century. Thomson's third opera was *Lord Byron* [1961-68, first performed 1972]. Other composers who have used Stein's texts as librettos include Ned Rorem, for the short opera *Three Sisters Who Are Not Sisters* (1968), and Al Carmines, who set her words in *What Happened* (1963), *In Circles* (1967), *The Making of Americans* (1972), *Listen to Me* (1975), and *A Manoir* (1977). As "Gertrude S." and "Virgil T." appear as characters in *The Mother of Us All*, so are Stein and Toklas, and Oscar Wilde and Lord Alfred Douglas as well, in the cast list of Carmines' coming-out work *The Faggot* (1973).

As Britten, working in an era before gay liberation, made pacifism his primary cause, so did gay American composer Marc Blitzstein [1905-1964] channel his social consciousness into music theatre works dealing with laborers struggling against scoundrelly bosses, and with related issues, in *The Cradle Will Rock*
[1937], *Regina* [1949], and a 1952 adaptation of Bertolt Brecht and Kurt Weill's *Threepenny Opera* (1928). At the time of his death at the hands of sailors in Martinique, Blitzstein was at work on an opus, commissioned for the Metropolitan Opera, about anarchists Bart Vanzetti and Nicola Sacco. Blitzstein’s biographer Eric A. Gordon has pointed out a homoerotic touch in the original Broadway staging of the opera *Regina*. Two black male servants observe (through a window) a party given by their rapacious white employer and imitate actions of the guests. Among the targets of the men's mockery is an extravagant romantic scene, which they reenact.

In Samuel Barber’s *Antony and Cleopatra* (1966), Antony and his young shield-bearer, Eros, have a tender farewell scene. On the verge of defeat by Octavius Caesar, Antony bids Eros to run him through with his sword. After words of affection and praise, the youth kills himself to avoid having to slay his master. The libretto, after William Shakespeare’s play, is by Franco Zeffirelli (born 1923), filmmaker, and director and designer of many operas, who came out publicly in an *Advocate* interview. Zeffirelli was a protégé of gay film director Luchino Visconti (1906–1976), who also staged and designed opera. Other gay opera directors or designers have been the Metropolitan Opera’s Bruce Donnell, actor Charles Ludlam, choreographer Mark Morris, photographer Cecil Beaton, and artist David Hockney. Gay librettists include lovers Wystan Hugh Auden and Chester Kallman, for Igor Stravinsky’s *The Rake’s Progress* and Hans Werner Henze’s *Elegy for Young Lovers* and *The Bassarids*, Langston Hughes for Weill’s *Street Scene*, and William M. Hoffman, author of *As Is*, a play about AIDS, for John Corigliano’s *A Figaro for Antonia*, commissioned by the Met for production in 1991.

Operas of Ned Rorem, who came out in his *Paris Diary* (1966) and *New York Diary* (1967), include *Miss Julie* (1965), after August Strindberg, and *Bertha* (1973), about a Queen of Norway.

In Argentine composer Alberto Ginastera’s *Bomarzo* (1967), Pier Francesco Orsini, the hunchbacked Duke of Bomarzo, is impotent with his wife, Giulia Farnese, and with the courtesan Pentasilea, but “dearly loves” his powerful slave Abul. Orsini dreams that wife, courtesan, and slave compete for possession of him. At Orsini’s command, the faithful Abul kills Maerbale, the Duke’s brother, who dressed Orsini in female clothing as a child and later became Giulia’s lover.

*The Seventies and Eighties*. The year 1970 brought the premieres of Ben Johnston’s *Carmilla*, based on Sheridan La Fanu’s novel, which influenced Bram Stoker’s *Dracula*, and concerning Laura’s seduction by the vampire Carmilla, and Sir Michael Tippett’s *The Knot Garden*, in which interracial male lovers Dov, a musician, and Mel, a writer, undergo trials, including humiliation, and separation by heterosexual partners, before their reunion. Operas based on plays by gay writers Federico García Lorca [1899–1936]— *Yerma* by Heitor Villa-Lobos, a posthumous premiere—and Tennessee Williams’ (1911–1983) *Summer and Smoke* by Lee Hoiby, with libretto by Lanford Wilson—were introduced in 1971. [A Williams short story, “Lord Byron’s Love Letter,” received operatic treatment by composer Rafaello de Banfield in 1955. ] Conrad Susa’s *Transformations* (1973) uses as a text Anne Sexton’s poetic versions of fairy tales and includes a lesbian interpretation of the story of Rapunzel. The historical homosexual figure Henry, Lord Darnley (1545–1567), husband of the titular monarch, is a character in Thea Musgrave’s *Mary, Queen of Scots* (1977). His enemies in the opera call him vain, ambitious, weak, and foppish. Slightly tangential, but pertinent to the topic of opera, is the oratorio *The Return of the Great Mother* (1977), by composer Roberta Kosse [born 1947] and librettist Jenny Malmquist. The work celebrates matriarchy and women's
relationships with women. *A Lesbian Play for Lucy* (1978), with music by Tamara Bliss and libretto by Eleanor Hakim, examines the relationships among Demeter, Hecate, Persephone, and Athena.

While during the 1970s, gay opera fans were spoken of with hostility and contempt in print by soprano Régine Crespin (*High Fidelity*, 1977) and actor and aficionado Tony Randall (*Opera News* and *After Dark*, 1972), the decade also found writers in the gay press, including the *Bay Area Reporter*’s George Heymont and *Gay Community News*’s Nicholas Deutsch, a director, and Michael Bronski, beginning to write about opera from a gay angle.

In *A Quiet Place* (1983) by Leonard Bernstein (born 1918), bisexual François is Dede’s husband as well as her brother, Junior’s former lover. While—to the consternation of gay activists—relatively few people who work in opera have openly declared their homosexuality (apparently fearing loss of prestige or employment in a profession heavily dependent on voluntary public subsidy), in the scurrilous, homophobic *Bernstein: A Biography* (1987), Joan Peyser discussed the homosexual orientations of numerous musicians who had not come out publicly, including the subject of her book, composers Aaron Copland, Virgil Thomson, Samuel Barber, and Gian Carlo Menotti; and conductor Dimitri Mitropoulos (Menotti later came out in an *Advocate* interview).

Homophobia mars Dominick Argento’s *Casanova’s Homecoming* (1985), also called *Casanova*, in which the Marquis de Lisle, described as asexual but depicted as a mincing stereotypical homosexual, is made the butt of the opera’s climactic joke for his failure to indulge in heterosexual intercourse. Sam Michael Belich’s *Laius and Chrysippus* (1986), with a text by *Opera Monthly* contributor Sam H. Shirakawa, depicts the love affair of Laius, father of Oedipus, and Chrysippus, son of Pelops, in music the *New York Native* called “Straussian.” A major character in Jay Reise’s *Rasputin* (1988) is homosexual Russian prince Feliks Feliksovich Yusupov, one of the murderers of the mad monk Rasputin in 1916.

During the 1980s, opera lost many talented individuals to AIDS, including New York City Opera baritones and stage directors David Hicks and Ronald Bentley, Mettenor James Atherton, and *Opera News* editor Robert M. Jacobson. Singers and conductors have participated in AIDS benefit concerts, such as “A Gala Night for Singing” in East Hampton, New York (1985), organized by Jacobson and openly gay manager Matthew A. Epstein and featuring Aprile Millo, Jerry Hadley and others, and “Music for Life”, at Carnegie Hall (1987), which benefited Gay Men’s Health Crisis and started Leontyne Price, Marilyn Horne, Luciano Pavarotti, Samuel Ramey, Leonard Bernstein, and James Levine.

During the 1980s, gay choruses were formed and began interacting with the opera world. Opera singers Faith Esham and Jane Shaulis have appeared with the New York City Gay Men’s Chorus, while the San Francisco Gay Men’s Chorus participated in San Francisco Opera performances of Wagner’s *Der Fliegende Holländer* and *Parsifal*. In 1988, the Portland, Oregon, Gay Men’s Chorus presented Lou Harrison’s opera *Young Caesar*. While Handel’s *Giulio Cesare* focuses on Julius Caesar’s [102–44 B.C.] involvement with Cleopatra, Harrison’s work explores the Roman general and statesman’s affair with the Oriental king of Bithynia, Nicomedes IV. During this decade, Ira Siff, who sang tenor in Al Carmines’ works, formed La Gran Scena Opera (1981), which presents opera parodies, blurs gender with travesti diva portrayals (notably Siff’s Madame Vera Galupe-Borzinsk), and includes gay *double-entendres* in performances. Similar work has been done by David Clenny, who sang male soprano with the Handel Society in the 1970s and took the travesti title part in his own *La Contessa dei Vampiri* (1987), and by Eng-
lishman Michael Aspinall, who is billed as "the Surprising Soprano."


Bruce-Michael Gelbert

OPPRESSION, GAY

The concept of gay oppression was disseminated by the Gay Liberation Front founded in New York City in the summer of 1969 and by similar groups elsewhere that took GLF as their model and ideological paradigm.

Early Statements and Background. In a typical statement, the British Gay Liberation Front declared [December 1970] that its first priority was "to defend the immediate interests of gay people against discrimination and social oppression." It added that "the roots of the oppression that gay people suffer run deep in our society, in particular to the structure of the family, patterns of socialization, and the Judeo-Christian culture. Legal reform and education against prejudice, though possible and necessary, cannot be a permanent solution. While existing social structures remain, social prejudice and overt repression can always re-emerge... GLF therefore sees itself as part of the wider movement aiming to abolish all forms of social oppression." Among the social groups suffering from one of the multiforms of oppression, its manifesto listed women, black people and other national minorities, the working class, young people, and peoples oppressed by imperialism.

This bill of grievances grew out of the experience and the thinking of the New Left in the late 1960s, which saw repressive practices at work in many areas of Western society where the inferior status of particular segments of the population had been taken for granted or justified as necessary on utilitarian grounds. The analogies with the disadvantaged condition of the aforementioned social categories shaped the notion of "gay oppression" as a pervasive set of wrongs inflicted by an establishment that imposed a heterosexual norm on the whole of society. Obligatory heterosexuality, the need to conceal one's sexual identity, the social ostracism and economic boycott to which known homosexuals were subjected, police harassment and sporadic violence at the hands of hooligans, the entire structure of privilege which the Judeo-Christian tradition conferred on the patriarchal family—all these burdens that the homosexual had to endure in an intolerant society were ascribed to a system of oppression that the Gay Liberation Front aspired to overthrow, along with the rest of the injustices for which the capitalist order was held responsible.

An Italian writer appealing to the classical Marxist tradition, Mario Mieli, went even further, asserting that "the monosexual Norm... is based on the mutilation of Eros, and in particular on the condemnation of homosexuality. It is clear from this that only when we understand why the homoerotic impulse is repressed in the majority, by the whole mechanism of society, will we be able to grasp how the exclusive or at least highly predominant assertion of heterosexual desire in the majority comes about." He added that the process of repression began in childhood, when homosexual tendencies are branded as "feminine" and shameful, and the whole subject is treated as unspeakable.

Realities of Oppression. Such concepts were undoubtedly shaped in large measure by the personal experiences which many gay activists had to undergo at various times in their lives, when they confronted head-on the hostility of society and its relentless pressure to conform to the norm of heterosexuality. Still later, they were able to see how across centuries of European history homosexuals had been the object of persecution as ferocious as
that inflicted on religious minorities and ethnic groups, how the very existence of the homosexual minority had been denied by a church which claimed to uphold ideals of justice and humanity. In some respects the oppression of homosexuals was greater than that of demographic categories which may have been denied political and economic rights and been marginalized by the practice of segregation and ostracism, but at least had a recognized place, however unenviable, in the social order. The most crying aspect of the injustice was its invisibility to the rest of society, which either tacitly accepted it or was simply unaware that it existed.

Appeals to the courts for the recognition of homosexual rights had met with flat rejection on the grounds that homosexual behavior was per se immoral and illegal, while the validity of the ascetic morality was unchallenged. The further pressure of ostracism served to keep the victims of oppression from fighting back, because their efforts would only intensify the rejection and marginality. Worst of all was that many homosexuals internalized the guilt and self-reproach instilled by the attitudes of society.

All these phenomena found parallels in the oppression of other social and economic groups in the contemporary world, and the sense of kinship and solidarity with them buoyed the spirits of the founders of the radical organizations that "took to the streets" as part of the radical upsurge of the late 1960s. The goal of "ending gay oppression" became part of the universal struggle for justice and equality which seemed to be inching forward with every independence movement in the former colonies and every campaign of a minority for the rights which it had been unjustly denied.

Problems. Some difficulties arise with this overall analysis of the situation of homosexuals in terms of oppression. First, the situation of homosexuals presents notable differences from that of ethnic minorities. These incompatibilities emerge when gay leaders meet exasperating rebuffs, as they often do, in their efforts to build coalitions with leaders of ethnic blocs. Significantly, the late Harvey Milk, one of the most successful practitioners of coalition politics, achieved his goals mainly with San Francisco's old-line labor movement rather than with the city's ethnic leaders.

Another difficulty has to do with the broader contextualization of the idea of oppression. As practiced up to now, the analysis of oppression tends to be embedded in two broader ideologies, neither of which now enjoys hegemony in any western society. A major strand of the Judeo-Christian worldview sees the rich and powerful as obstacles to the work of redemption, for their heartless subjugation of the poor and downtrodden stands in the way of the achievement of a just society. While this critique is currently most salient in Liberation Theology, it has a substantial biblical foundation, for the concept was a creation of the Hebrew prophets of the Old Testament, who lent it the full force of their moral authority and powerful eloquence. A not dissimilar value-contrast appears in Marxism, with its perception of the class struggle between the exploiters and the proletariat—though it seeks to ground its interpretation of the phenomenon of oppression in economic analysis rather than an appeal to religious eschatology. Quite apart from the growing disenchantment of the larger society with both these ideologies, gay people have many reproaches to address to both, owing to their histories of homophobia.

There is also a counterculture concept that was loosely invoked in the late 1960s as the right to reject as "oppressive" every cultural norm or every demand made on the individual by society. Such an approach ill coincides with the mounting need of advanced industrial societies for a highly self-disciplined citizenry, and is wholly incompatible with the renuncia-
tion of individual self-interest that collectivist ideologies such as Marxism formally entail.

As has been noted, all subsequent analyses of oppression stem from the original insights of the Hebrew Prophets. While it is theoretically possible to devise a critique of oppression independent of both the Judeo-Christian tradition and its Marxist offshoot, the task has not been seriously attempted, and it is hard to see what framework might serve the purpose. Detached from the larger intellectual context that would give it meaning, the discourse of oppression now seems rhetorical. While it undoubtedly encapsulates social and psychological realities, it does so in a partial way that many find unsatisfying.


Ward Houser

Mouth-to-Penis Activity. The ancient Mediterranean peoples were familiar with this behavior in both its homosexual and heterosexual forms. The Romans distinguished between fellatio—in which the penetrating partner remains relatively motionless, allowing his receptive partner to do most of the work—and irrumation, in which the penetrator engages in vigorous buccal or laryngal thrusts. Depending on the individual, both are felt to enhance the penetrator's masculinity: in fellatio the beneficiary of the action luxuriates in making the other service him completely, while in irrumation he has the converse satisfaction of being able to give full vent to the impulse to aggressive penile thrusts. In modern writings, however, it is usual to refer to both forms simply as fellatio; the street terms "cock-sucking," "blow job," and "[giving/getting] head" are also current.

There are three common positions in this form of sexual activity. In the first, the penetrator stands, while his partner kneels, sits, or crouches to take the erect member in his mouth. In the second main position, the penetrator lies on his back, and the insertee crouches over him or lies between his legs. In the third position, especially suitable for irrumation, the insertee lies on his back with head propped up, and the penetrator straddles his chest, leaning forward over his head while thrusting forward. Of course there are many variants and intermediate positions.

The novice fellator tends to be inexpert in various ways that may prove frustrating to his partner. Since he has usually not yet overcome the gag reflex, he may take only the head of his partner's member in his mouth rather than deepthroating it, which is optimal. Furthermore, anxiety about ejaculation may cause him to slow his movements or even freeze up at the stage in which the tempo of the action should be increased. With relaxation and experience these difficulties are usually overcome, and many prac-
tioners learn to swallow the semen, even developing an appreciation of variations in its taste.

There is a tendency to associate the two very different roles in fellatio—penetration and reception—with a hierarchy of beauty, age, and sexual orientation, wherein the favored position is that of penetrator. With respect to the latter, many men who regard themselves as heterosexual will accept a blow job ("trade"), claiming that there is little difference between a female and a male mouth; yet they show revulsion at the slightest suggestion that they should return the favor. This attitude is characteristic of a certain type of adolescent male prostitute, in toilet sex contacts it has been observed that younger men expect to be fellated, but as they get older will switch to the receptor role. Some older men are only active as cocksuckers, having long since given up the expectation of having their own member orally stimulated. By convention, regardless of the source of effort, the penetrator is considered "active" and the inserter "passive."

Some hold that sixty-nine, in which the two partners fellate one another simultaneously, is ideal because of its mutuality. Certainly this reciprocity offers a psychological advantage. Yet sixty-nine has real drawbacks. First, the position decreases each partner's maneuverability. Secondly, the distraction at one end tends to cause a slowdown or even cessation of activity at the other. Finally, the tongue is of necessity on the upper side of the penis, where it is less stimulating than it would be if it were placed on the lower side. For these reasons, many prefer serial fellatio to the simultaneous mutual form known as sixty-nine.

In the 1980s oral–penile activity has become more popular as it has been shown that the risk of contracting the AIDS virus is either insignificant, especially for the penetrator, or at least enormously lower than with penile–anal activity. However, oral activities do not usually lend themselves to shielding the penis in a rubber condom, while anal ones do.

Lesbian Oral Activity. Physically, lesbian cunnilingus does not differ in any essential way from heterosexual cunnilingus, the configurations of the mouths of women and men being essentially the same. However, the fact that a woman is better able to gauge the physiological responses of another woman than is a man (a factor which also favors male fellators) allows for lengthy and subtle sessions that take advantage of the capacity of women for multiple orgasms. As with men, the oral activity may be sequential, onewoman sucking another first and then having the favor returned, or the sixty-nine position may be assumed. However, lesbian relations are less likely to be hierarchical, so that neither partner is "left in the lurch" by receiving an inadequate amount of stimulation. Contrary to popular belief, modern lesbians rarely resort to dildoes, though electrical vibrators—usually not phallic-shaped—may be employed as a supplement to oral activity.

There is virtually no risk of venereal disease, including AIDS, in lesbian activity. However, yeast and other infections of the vaginal region may on occasion be transferred to the mouth.

Variations. Some people enjoy giving their partner a tongue bath, though the extent of this procedure is usually limited by the exhaustion of the tonguer's saliva. Many restrict themselves to French kissing, laving the inside of the outer ear, nipple sucking, or (less commonly) toe sucking.

Anilingus or "rimming" is the tonguing of the anus. Although this is mildly enjoyable to the recipient of the action, the main benefit appears to be the psychological effect that the rimmer has of accepting his partner totally. In other cases, however, the rimmer may be enacting his own self-abasement, and in a few extreme scenes his partner may even expel faeces which he then ingests. One need scarcely stress that anilingus in all of its versions
is dangerous to health; it has been implicated in hepatitis and probably transmits other diseases as well. Erotic urination may take place in or into the mouth, sometimes as an adjunct to oral sex; unlike faeces, however, fresh urine is normally sterile and thus poses no comparable health problem.

Legal aspects. In the canon law of the medieval church the definition of sodomy included all forms of oral sexuality, whether the partners were of opposite sexes or of the same sex, because the possibility of fecundation was excluded in both. The prosecution of participants in oral sexuality, however, has certainly been less frequent than legal action against those engaging in anal penetration, and in regard to lesbians, virtually non-existent.

While English common law took over many of the canon law definitions, in 1817 a court decision excluded oral sexuality from the definition of buggery, so that the crime was later prosecuted under other statutes such as those prohibiting gross indecency, lewd and lascivious conduct, and the like. In entrapment cases, however, the unsuspecting victim of the plainclothesman’s advance may have agreed to nothing more than one of the forms of oral sex in order to find himself under arrest.

In the recent Georgia case of Bowers v. Hardwick, which went to the United States Supreme Court (1986), the party under indictment had been accidentally observed in the act of fellating another male; the court ruled that the American legal precedents extending the right of privacy to heterosexual intercourse did not apply to sodomy.


Organizations
See Movement, Homosexual.

Orientation, Sexual
The expression sexual orientation, which came into general use only in the 1970s, denotes the stable pattern established by an individual of erotic and affectional response to others with respect to gender. Commonly two orientations, heterosexual and homosexual, are recognized; many would add bisexual. Attractions to sectors within the male and female populations with respect to age, race, and the like are not normally regarded as orientations, nor are such paraphilias as eroticization of urine and sadomasochism (S/M).

In comparison with older judgmental terms, such as sexual deviation and perversion, sexual orientation has the advantage of value neutrality. In comparison with the expression sexual preference, it emphasizes that erotic attraction stems from the deep structure of the personality, and is not a mere choice or taste which can be easily altered. Moreover, the metaphor of orientation, which originally referred to alignment according to the points of the compass, suggests the possibility of variety among individuals, rather than the rigid either/or contrast that a strict polarity of heterosexual/homosexual implies. Finally, the concept of sexual orientation conveys something of the complex interactions between the individual personality (itself made up of conscious and unconscious components), on the one hand, and the changing scripts and cues being transmitted by the social environment, on the other. One responds to a subtle “landscape of eros” as posited by society, but one does so in keeping with one’s individual character and experience.

In the view of some, the expression should be altered to affectional orientation, to indicate a broader concern with the whole person, rather than overtly expressed erotic or genital acts. Restriction
to the specifically erotic has also been felt to be a defect of the term homosexual itself, hence the temporary popularity of the word homophile.

In its remote origins, the term orientation stems from architecture, where it signifies the alignment of temples and churches on an east–west axis (from orient, “east”). In psychology it has come to mean awareness of one’s position or direction with reference to time, place, or identity of persons; also it denotes a tendency to move toward a source of stimulation or a particular direction, as in tropisms. From this nexus it is but a short step to the concept of sexual orientation. The widespread adoption of the expression is related to the 1970s popularity of such compounds as action-oriented, identity-oriented, and success-oriented. It is possible that the semantic modulation into the erotic sphere was anticipated by the late-nineteenth-century German use, with respect to sex, of the term Richtung, “direction.”

Wayne R. Dynes

ORIGIN MYTHS
See Inventor Legends.

ORPHEUS

Greek mythological figure, the son of the muse Calliope, noted for his magical art in music and poetry. Whether Orpheus was a historical personality is disputed, but if so he lived in the generation before the Trojan War, therefore in the thirteenth century B.C.

Orpheus in Antiquity. A number of important aspects of the career of Orpheus are recounted by ancient Greek writers. Of Thracian origin, Orpheus possessed musical skill that could enchant animals and plants and cause them to do his will. Trees would transplant themselves for him, while birds and even fish gathered to hear his song. As a member of the expedition of the Argonauts, he beat time for the rowers and stilled harsh winds.

When his wife Eurydice died of the bite of a poisonous snake and was taken to Hades, Orpheus obtained her release by giving a concert for the ruler of the Underworld. Warned not to look at Eurydice on the trip home, Orpheus yielded to temptation and lost her forever. Orpheus then gathered around him a group of Thracian young men, to whom he introduced the new practice of pederasty. Greek vase paintings show this ephebic entourage enchanted by the splendors of his song. Yet Orpheus’ influence provoked resentment among the forsaken female companions of his new lovers. The women—sometimes identified with the maenads of the Dionysiac cult—ganged up on him, attacking the musician with spears, axes, and stones. Orpheus was dismembered, his head separated from the rest. Eventually the head floated away, still singing, together with his lyre. Orpheus’ head washed ashore on the island of Lesbos, where it received the honor of a shrine. The shrine could still be visited in ancient times, and reputedly the head might be heard faintly singing. Some scribes claimed to have taken down the words, which then presumably provided the texts for the Orphic hymns. Around these hymns developed a religious cult, Orphism, whose role and significance are still the object of debate by historians.

Most images of Orpheus in Greek and Roman art are either representative depictions of him as singer or dramatic scenes of his later career—his leadership of the male band in Thrace, his death, and the survival of the head. These last events were important to the Greeks not only because they laid the foundation for his influence after death, but because he was regarded as the inventor of pederasty. Although he was not the only candidate for this honor, his nomination reflects the Greek penchant for attributing significant cultural achievements to particular individuals. The Eurydice episode, which in modern consciousness has become virtually synonymous with Orpheus, was less important to the Greeks, and may
even be a later grafting onto the earlier torso of legend.

The Fortunes of Orpheus. The Middle Ages had a curiously divided concept of Orpheus. To some early Christian writers, such as Clement of Alexandria, the element of cosmic harmony seemed uppermost, and he was even compared to Christ. During the later Middle Ages, however, the singer was subject to moralization: as a sodomite, he was seen as deserving his fate.

It was left to the neo-Platonic circles of fifteenth-century Florence, with their fondness for merging pagan wisdom with a rarified Christianity, to rehabilitate Orpheus as seer, musician, and lover of men. The Greek Orphic hymns, now read once more, were hailed as evidence of Orpheus' skill as a mystical theologian. In 1480, apparently, Angelo Poliziano [Politian] created for the court of Mantua his brilliant short play, La Favola di Orfeo. At Mantua Poliziano could have inspected the frescoes of the life and death of Orpheus done by Andrea Mantegna six years before. In his play Poliziano boldly states that after losing Eurydice Orpheus turned with great zest to his own sex. The Italian humanist's description of Orpheus' later career echoes the Latin poet Ovid, with some touches of his own. A lover of youths, Orpheus "plucks the new flowers, the springtime of the better sex when men are all lithe and slender."

The finest artistic representation of the revived ancient Orpheus is by a northern painter, Albrecht Dürer. In a masterly drawing of 1494 he reworked an earlier Mantegna design to show a heroic Orpheus—virtually a pagan martyr—dying at the hands of frenzied maenads. The banderole contains a German inscription reading "Orfeus der erst puseran" [Orpheus the first bugger], a blunt expression by which Dürer acknowledged the musician's distinction as the inventor of homosexuality.

In the second half of the sixteenth century the chill winds of the Counterreformation gradually suppressed knowledge of the homoerotic themes of classical antiquity. Thus Ottavio Rinuccini's Florentine opera Euridice of 1600 deals only with the married Orpheus—he even brought Eurydice back to her husband in a happy ending. This tradition of suppressing his later career has been generally followed in all the arts. Toward the end of the nineteenth century there was a revival of the tragic Orpheus, as seen in paintings by Odilon Redon and Álvarez de Sotomayor, but usually as an emblem of the alienated artist, and not as a sexual innovator. To the modern gay movement was left the task of reviving the homoerotic Orpheus.


Wayne R. Dynes

ORTON, JOE (JOHN KINGSLEY) (1933–1967)

English playwright and novelist. In the 1960s, Orton's works shocked British audiences and had a significant impact on the direction of contemporary drama, despite the slender canon he had produced before he was bludgeoned to death in 1967 by his long-time lover, Kenneth Halliwell, in a murder-suicide, sparked by artistic as well as sexual jealousies.

Orton, self-educated under Halliwell's guidance after the two met while students at the Royal Academy of Dramatic Arts, offered a cynical view of human nature, grounded in violence, sexuality, exploitation, greed, narcissism, and ruthlessness, in plays that are nonetheless witty, urbane, and stylized. An artistic descendent of Oscar Wilde, Orton wrote drama that can be thought of as either
social farce, moral satire, or ethical parody—or all three simultaneously. His
dramatic world is comedic, but blackly so,
and homosexuality pervades the sex-infused world of his theatre, in every work he
produced.

Before his and Halliwell’s conviction and jail sentence in 1962 for defacing
library books (a situation worthy of an Orton plot), he had written little, collaborat-
ing with his lover on the manuscripts of four unpublished novels. After his release,
however, Orton began to write furiously, affected both by incarceration and his first
separation from Halliwell. In 1964, he wrote The Ruffian on the Stair and his
brilliant Entertaining Mr. Sloane, the latter a touchstone to his vision of inherent
human depravity as a brother and sister try to outmaneuver each other to seduce the
charmingly dangerous young man who has begun to dominate and exploit them
and their home. Also in 1964, he completed Loot, whose 1966 production made him a
celebrity, and his television play, The Good
and Faithful Servant, an unusually bitter
examination of the condition of the working
classes—if still quite witty in form. In
1966, he wrote The Erpingham Camp and
an unproduced screenplay for the Beatles,
Up Against It; in 1967, Orton produced
another television play, Funeral Games,
and the play many consider to be his finest
achievement, What the Butler Saw, staged
posthumously in 1969. His only other
independent work was a novel completed in
1961, The Vision of Combold Proval,
published in 1971 as Head to Toe.

Orton’s drama was designed to
shock and disorient, motives clearly re-
vealed in the diaries he kept, and his work
accomplished just that: it challenged the
comfortable assumptions of London’s tra-
titional and safe West End and offered
theatre audiences an amoral view of them-
selves with an impact and shock of recog-
nition unmitigated by its witty and intel-
ligent presentation. As a boost to the
“school of anger” of the previous decade,
Orton’s drama coupled with the works of
Harold Pinter (one of the few fellow drama-
tists Orton admired) to jar the British
theatre from the complacency that had
characterized it for the many years previ-
ous, allowing both America and France to
forge ahead into much more adventurous
dramatic territory.

Orton, however, never believed
his plays were as outrageous and improb-
able as did his audiences and critics, for his
diaries demonstrate that much of his vi-
sion came directly from his own life rather
than from fanciful literary imagination.
For example, his addiction to sexual en-
counters in public toilets explains much
about the pervasion of anonymous and
indifferent sexuality in his written work.
Had he lived, his would have no doubt
been one of the most pervasive presences
in the drama of the last two decades,
but his few works have still had a pro-
found influence in shaping the dual vision
of current drama and its multiplicity of
effect.

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Rodney Simard

OWEN, WILFRED
(1893–1918)

English poet. Born in Oswestry,
Shropshire, Owen was educated at the
Birkenhead Institute, Liverpool, and at
University College, Reading. His relation-
ship with his affectionate, devout but not
intellectual mother was the closest of his
life, but a source of many difficulties.
Despite her hopes and prayers Owen did
not become a clergyman but even lost his
faith. A tutor at Bordeaux at the moment
World War I broke out, he returned to
England and enlisted in the Artists’ Rifles
in 1915. In January 1917 he was sent to the
Somme with the 2nd Battalion Man-
chester Regiment. He was soon recording
the horrors of life at the front in letters he wrote home, and as a victim of "shell shock" he was sent to convalesce at Craiglockhart War Hospital, near Edinburgh, where he met Siegfried Sassoon, another patient. For Owen it was the friendship of a lifetime, far more important to him than any previous literary encounter. Their conversations and subsequent correspondence gave Owen's poetic vocation focus and meaning, and Sassoon's supportive criticisms helped to curb his friend's tendency to lush overwriting. Recovered from his ordeal, Owen returned to France in August 1918. He was awarded the Maltese Cross, but was killed a week before the Armistice while leading his men across a canal.

His brother, Harold Owen, deliberately tried to keep the poet's reputation under the control of the family, turning away researchers prying into Wilfred's personal life. He dreaded particularly that someone might raise the "frightful implication" of homosexuality. He even claimed that when pressed on the subject Wilfred had denied any personal involvement but admitted to an "abstract" interest because homosexuality seemed to attract so many intelligent people. At the poet's own request his mother burned "a sack full" of his papers, and remarkably few letters to him have survived. Only four poems by Owen were published in his lifetime; the great ones, the chief poems, written during the last twelve months of his life, were issued from the press in 1920 with an introduction by Siegfried Sassoon, next to whom he is the greatest of English war poets.

Having grown up in a world in which homosexuality was unthinkable, Owen may have repressed and denied his inclinations until Sassoon introduced him to one of the very few literary circles where "Uranianism" was accepted and casually discussed. Sassoon's own ideas came from the circle around Edward Carpenter, who preached a gospel of idealized Uranian love. From him Owen derived the awareness of these matters that illuminates his last poems and his thoughts on religion and war. His interest in young male beauty became one of the sources of his poetry. Owen discovered that the artistic temperament which he sought in himself was a function of his homosexuality, or to reverse the equation, that his sexual tendencies were a boon for art and for humanity. He also made the acquaintance of Robert Ross, the intimate of Oscar Wilde, whose life was ended by a scandal that occurred in 1918. Thus Owen was heir to two major strands of homosexual thought in the early twentieth century—the ethical and the aesthetic—and only his premature death precluded their further unfolding in his verse.


Warren Johansson

OXFORD

See Cambridge and Oxford.