

EXILES AND ÉMIGRÉS

Over the course of the centuries, political vicissitudes and, after the rise of **Christianity** and **Islam**, religious bigotry have forced gay people to leave their own countries and seek refuge abroad. The ingrained adaptability and propensity for disguise and camouflage of homosexuals has often facilitated this process, but the coercive nature of the change has tended to induce a cautious temper in those upon whom it has been forced.

Historical Examples. The earliest known homosexual refugee fled the Greek island of Samos in the late sixth century B.C. The philosopher and mathematician Pythagoras escaped the tyranny of Polycrates, himself a pederast, who had made the island a great maritime power and cultural center. Later, in 521, when the Persians crucified him and suppressed pederasty there, the pederastic poets he had attracted to his court, **Ibycus** and **Anacreon**, fled.

There are no known instances of ostracism (banishment by popular vote) in ancient Greece for pederasty. The Romans knew a form of voluntary self-banishment called *exsilium*. Magistrates would allow those guilty of a capital crime to escape, but they could never return to Roman territory.

In later centuries, when Christianity had influenced the **Roman emperors** to impose the death penalty for homosexual activity, the extreme penalty was sometimes commuted to banishment. Expelling the sodomite from its territory was sufficient to placate or at least deflect the divine wrath that would otherwise have spelled immeasurable woe for the state. In the great prosecution inspired by **Protestantism** of homosexuals in the Netherlands in 1730, 57 of the 250 men and boys who were convicted were put to death, while the majority were simply banished from the country. At other times culprits took to flight as a way of escaping burning at the stake, inflicted when the

Inquisition "relaxed" sodomites to the secular authorities, or in England (which never allowed the Inquisition to enter) the hangman's noose—or in the eighteenth and early nineteenth centuries, when English homophobia reached an apex, exposure in the pillory.

Some sodomites fled persecution to the Italian **Renaissance** cities even before the religious and other disputes of the sixteenth century in Europe caused much displacement of individuals who, for one reason or another, could not accept the new state of affairs in their native land—or the continuation of the old one. Among these was the French philologist and professor Marc-Antoine **Muret** (1526–1585), who had to escape to Italy to elude punishment for sodomy. Many by flight avoided prison and perpetual imprisonment or the galleys—the penalties meted out by the Spanish and Portuguese **Inquisitions** more often than burning at the stake.

Conversely, the abolition of the sodomy laws in **France** in 1791 and subsequently in other countries, including all the Latin ones (except Romania) and their colonies overseas, that adopted the Code **Napoléon** made these lands an appealing haven for northern European and Anglo-Saxon homosexuals. Even before the French Revolution the very wealthy eccentric **William Beckford** had found it prudent to leave England for Portugal. In the Napoleonic period three clergymen, the Rev. John Fenwick, the Rev. V. P. Littlehales, and the Bishop of Clogher were obliged to flee England. The case of the last-named individual, a member of an aristocratic Anglo-Irish family, was so notorious that in French his name became a sobriquet for a British sodomite. Two other Hibernian figures were more fortunate. Lady Eleanor Butler (1739–1829) and Sarah Ponsonby (1755–1831) fled Ireland together in 1778; in the following year they settled in a rustic cottage near **Llan-gollen**, Wales, where they resided unmo- lested—and in fact increasingly admired—for the rest of their lives.

Two great poets of romanticism, George Gordon, Lord Byron, who was bisexual, and the exclusively homosexual Count August von Platen resided much of their lives in Mediterranean countries. The inspirational homeland of ancient Greek pederasty, Greece, not under the Napoleonic Code but under Ottoman Turkish influence, tolerated homosexuality as did all Moslem countries. Improvements in the ease and convenience of travel made expatriation an option for an increasing number, including John Addington Symonds, Frederick Rolfe ("Baron Corvo"), and the nonsense writer and artist Edward Lear. Karl Heinrich Ulrichs, the lonely German pioneer of homosexual rights, who began to protest even before in 1866 Prussian prohibitions were imposed on his native Hanover, formerly under the Code Napoleon, passed his last years in L'Aquila in Abruzzi, where he died in misery in 1895, though not before Symonds had visited him. After his release from prison in 1897 Oscar Wilde departed from England for France, where he died three years afterwards. A few years later the French aesthete Count Jacques d'Adelswärd Fersen, after a scandal involving some photographs of boys, found it wise to withdraw for a time to the island of Capri (where the emperor Tiberius had long before established a retreat replete with a swimming pool filled with boys and girls to service him). Capri was then entering its modern apogee as a place of residence of foreign homosexuals. In the last Byzantine capital in Sicily, Taormina, whose views of Etna vie with Capri's of Vesuvius, the German Baron Wilhelm von Gloeden produced his celebrated photographs of Sicilian boys and attracted other foreign pederasts. On the eve of World War I actual colonies of English and German homosexuals lived in Italy, where they had taken up residence after being compromised socially or legally in their own countries, scenic Venice, where Winckelmann was murdered, being a favorite, along with

Florence and Rome, both beautified by Michelangelo.

Lesbians, even if less likely to be menaced by the law, still had to fear intolerant public opinion, particularly in Protestant lands. The Americans Natalie Barney, Sylvia Beach, Romaine Brooks, Gertrude Stein, and Alice B. Toklas preferred to reside in Paris. So too did Radclyffe Hall, after her novel *The Well of Loneliness* (1928) was banned in England. Vernon Lee, the lesbian writer on aesthetics, chose to live in Florence.

Refugees from Totalitarianism.

The best known and most numerous examples of exile and emigration occurred as a result of the authoritarian and totalitarian regimes of right and left in the twentieth century. In the 1920s many talented figures fled Communist Russia and Fascist Italy, to be joined in the early thirties by refugees from Nazi Germany and at the end of the decade from the annexed or occupied countries of Europe and from Franco Spain. After 1945 a new wave of refugees from an Eastern Europe that fell under Communist domination was followed by still others from Cuba and Vietnam when these countries shared the same fate. In the 1980s the Mariel refugees from Cuba and the Sino-Vietnamese boat people are melancholy reminders of the intolerance of Communist states. It was a well-known if not well-publicized fact that many of the Mariel émigrés were homosexuals fleeing the repressive policies of the Castro regime in Cuba, which while proclaiming equality for women and attempting to overcome the inveterate machismo of Latin American culture made the lot of the homosexuals on the island far worse than it had been under the deposed Fulgencio Batista. Gay bars and synagogues have disappeared from Havana as from Berlin under the Nazis.

Unlike many earlier refugees who vegetated on the margin of the intellectual and cultural life of their host countries, the trans-Atlantic migrants of the 1930s

bonded with American society (and English to a lesser extent) and inspired its higher culture. Before their arrival America was a provincial backwater whose third-rate academic institutions contrasted sadly with the European universities, but had in some places, richly endowed, begun to rise with the introduction of the German model of graduate study in the late nineteenth century and to catch up as Europe squandered its youth in World War I. With their help, it became a dominant force in the intellectual life of the mid-twentieth century and an exporter of the software—the ideas, innovations, trade secrets, and patents—consumed by other nations. Significantly, with the retirement of the émigrés and their immediate pupils, American supremacy began to fade.

During the 1930s and early 1940s, because the thirty or so major American universities could not absorb the influx of new talent, many went to smaller or less elite schools. This enrichment contributed to today's polycentrism of American colleges—the fact that many campuses undistinguished before 1940 have become significant centers of learning. There were, inevitably, significant concentrations. With its cosmopolitan tradition, New York drew social scientists to the New School for Social Research and painters and sculptors to Greenwich Village, where Hans Hofmann's school provided the nucleus for abstract expressionism. The gay painter Pavel Tchelitschew, earlier a refugee from Bolshevik Russia, represented surrealism, with a notable influence on film and writing as well as the visual arts. At New York University's Institute of Fine Arts Alfred Salmony, formerly of Cologne, made many converts to Oriental art, his specialty.

Near New York City was the lodestone of the highly gifted, Princeton's Institute for Advanced Study, with Albert Einstein as its presiding spirit. In Germany Einstein, though himself heterosexual, had signed Magnus Hirschfeld's petition against Paragraph 175 of the Penal Code. At Princeton he was later to be joined by

the distinguished medievalist, Ernst Kantorowicz, more or less openly gay and a former member of the Stefan George circle. At Berkeley Kantorowicz, along with Robert Oppenheimer who became director of the Princeton Institute, had stood out as one of a small number of faculty to lose their jobs because they had refused to sign the loyalty oath which was part of the anti-Communist furor of the late 1940s. As a homosexual Kantorowicz could have been deported for this act of defiance. Another medieval historian—the field seems to have an affinity with homosexuality—Theodor Mommsen, was affiliated with Princeton University and very attracted to the art historian A. M. Friend for a time. Princeton was also the home of the great Austrian novelist Hermann Broch, who there completed *The Death of Vergil* (1945).

Southern California was the destination of many artistically creative individuals. After a short stay in Princeton, the bisexual Thomas Mann settled in the Los Angeles area. His gay son Klaus also made his way to America. The Southern California scene was further enlivened by English gay exiles, including the novelist Christopher Isherwood, compelled to leave the Berlin he loved, and the actor Charles Laughton. The eccentric Anglo-Irish thinker Gerald Heard helped to lay the philosophical foundations for the gay movement. Also active in Southern California was the gay fashion designer Rudi Gernreich, who became the lover of Henry Hay, the founder of the American homophile movement. Hollywood gave refuge to many lesser figures in the entertainment world who found employment behind the scenes in the studios and were sometimes hunted by adherents of McCarthyism.

Not all gay émigrés went to North America. Outstanding exceptions were the Spanish poet Luis Cernuda, who settled in Mexico, and his compatriot the composer Manuel de Falla, who preferred Argentina. However, Latin American countries were

generally too underdeveloped economically and intellectually for such figures to make a permanent impress. In fact some refugees whose first haven was Latin America resettled in the United States.

Still others went to England. The philosopher Ludwig Wittgenstein, who remained in the closet, had settled there before the rise of Hitler. Kurt Hiller, the leftist writer and gay activist, lived in Prague until the Munich accords made it necessary for him to flee to England, where he proved unable to adapt and returned to West Germany in 1955. Anna Freud, who had conducted a closeted lesbian lifestyle for a time in Vienna, accompanied her famous father to his exile in England, then lived and practiced psychotherapy there until her death.

Amnesty International still refuses to protest the persecution and imprisonment for reasons of sexual orientation of homosexuals in any country, despite the appalling treatment meted out to them by such diverse authorities as those of Islamic countries, notorious among them the late Ayatollah Khomeini, or secular governments such as Turkey's on the one hand and Communist regimes on the other. In Argentina under the military junta in the 1970s the situation of the homophile movement deteriorated so badly that its leaders had to go into exile in monarchist Spain.

Conclusion. English and American prejudices and laws against homosexuality obliged homosexual refugees to hide their proclivities in order to gain entry

visas and then get and retain citizenship papers. Hence it is often difficult to obtain accurate information on persons dead or alive. It may be inferred that homosexuals succeeded less often than their heterosexual colleagues in escaping from Europe and getting into the Anglo-Saxon democracies. Even when they succeeded, they faced discrimination in academia, where even now there are barely fifty tenured professors who are openly gay on all the more than 2000 American college and university campuses, and not five in the Ivy League.

The history of oppression and totalitarianism is far from ended, and America may in the future open its doors to still other émigrés from foreign lands. Three main categories may be discerned in the ranks of gay émigrés and exiles through the ages: (1) those who had to flee their native lands to escape severe legal and social penalties; (2) those who judged it prudent to emigrate to lessen the burden of social ostracism and potential conflict with the law; and (3) those who preferred life abroad, with the sexual privileges accorded the foreigner, particularly one with independent means, to a confined existence at home. The study of émigré colonies in exotic parts of the globe may shed additional light on the lives and fortunes of the gay exiles.

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