

creative writer who freely transmutes experience into art. The frankness of Genet's handling of the homoerotic caused no little embarrassment to the critics and literary scholars who even managed to write articles in which the homosexual component of his work went totally unmentioned. But the novels in their realism defied all conventions and shattered the last barriers against the treatment of homosexuality in literature. Since French writing shapes literary trends throughout the world, the influence of Genet on future depictions of homosexual experience is likely to mount.

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GEOGRAPHY, SOCIAL

Geographical distribution of homosexuals in Western industrial societies is not random. Gay men and lesbians are more likely to live in urban areas than in the countryside, in large cities rather than towns, and (in the United States) on or near the two coasts rather than in the hinterland. In many countries, regions noted for their religious conservatism are not favored by homosexuals. In North America, where mobility is common, the single homosexual is more mobile than most, and will seek new locales based not only on the expectation of tolerance, but on climate and the availability of good cultural and recreational facilities. Many gay men and lesbians deliberately move far from their home areas to escape family constraints as well as peer pressure from people with whom they grew up.

The diminished visibility that most homosexuals find it expedient to adopt (and the absence of any usable census or survey statistics) hinder an accurate estimation of these clustering patterns. On the one hand, naive observers miss almost all the identifying signals; finding homosexuals nowhere, these people assume that they must be everywhere. Others, more alert to the gay presence, register it only in such areas of concentration as those mentioned, concluding that the concentration is absolute. It is not. There are many homosexuals living isolated lives in remote and unexpected places. Just as there are village atheists, there are village gays—though most small-town homosexuals choose to maintain a low profile. In any event, this article is concerned with the concentrations, and with the social semiotic that allows the inhabitants therein to establish group identity and community.

High-Visibility Concentrations.

In the United States media attention has spotlighted certain urban quarters in which homosexuals are highly visible, and even predominate, such as New York's Greenwich Village, San Francisco's Polk Street and Castro Street areas, and Houston's Montrose. These quarters are often termed "gay ghettos," a problematic expression, though one that would be difficult to eradicate. The word ghetto originally served to designate sections of Italian cities of the sixteenth century in which Jews were compelled to live under conditions of strict segregation. The ghettos were surrounded by walls behind which all Jews were required to withdraw at night—to prevent them from having sexual relations with Christians. In the 1920s the meaning of the term ghetto was significantly extended by sociologists of the Chicago School, who used it to refer not only to the urban enclaves favored by various immigrant groups—the Little Italys, Little Warsaws, and Chinatowns—but also to sections populated by bohemians, hobos, and prostitutes. Since the 1960s

it has been common to refer to black districts, such as New York's Harlem and Bedford-Stuyvesant, as ghettos. Clearly, the expression "gay ghetto" stretches the definition, possibly misleadingly so. Since most gay men and lesbians are not stereotypically identifiable to outsiders, they cannot be forced into a strictly delimited geographical enclave; indeed in all cities a majority of homosexuals choose to live outside "their" quarter, though they will usually visit it for entertainment and commercial transactions. Moreover, the boundaries of the gay urban concentrations are porous, so that it is impossible to say that some particular street marks the dividing line. Traditionally, the denizens of the ethnic slums struggled to climb out of them; the fashionable gay person struggles to acquire enough income to move in. Finally, gay populations often overlap in a kind of patchwork with other group concentrations, such as intellectuals and drug users. In some cases the overlapping of groups is a direct descendent of the early twentieth-century *bohémias*. During this period homosexuals often lived in boarding houses and YMCAs, which were also favored by other single people who had come to the city in order to be free of restrictions. Significantly, only one gay enclave today, West Hollywood, CA, is incorporated as a city, and that is shared with other groups. Although lesbians are usually welcome, few choose to live in the enclaves, perhaps because many have small children who need appropriate space and schools. It may be, however, that we are witnessing the beginnings of specifically lesbian enclaves in such areas as New York's East Village and the zone north of the Castro in San Francisco.

Characteristic Features of the Enclaves. Typically, the enclave is located fairly centrally—not downtown, but close enough and reachable by public transportation for those who do not wish to use cars. In this way it stands at the opposite pole from the universal emporium of today's mainstream: the suburban mall.

Initially, the quarter was somewhat run down, but it contains solid residential structures with "character" so that homosexuals, using their stereotypical (but often real) interior-decorating skills, can restore the buildings to their original liveability and dignity. This process of urban reclamation and rehabilitation has sometimes been termed "gentrification." Because they lead to increases in rents, such improvements are often resented by older, more impoverished residents. Inasmuch as many of these are members of racial minorities, the refurbishment trend has caused intergroup tensions.

As the character of the newly settled urban enclave begins to emerge, a number of features become evident. There is a greater profusion of shops catering to the childless affluent: antique stores, delicatessens, ice cream parlors, and bookstores. Bars and restaurants increase in number and elegance as the old-fashioned dives are gradually forced out by rising rents. Many of these changes parallel those occurring in "yuppie" (young, upwardly mobile professional) districts, and indeed the relative affluence of both groups, and the general absence of children, creates a degree of superficial social symbiosis. In Madison Avenue jargon both are the home of SINCS (single income, no children) and DINCS (dual income, no children). To distinguish the gay enclaves one must develop a more subtle eye for social semiotic. The inhabitants themselves have little difficulty, and when gay and yuppie districts overlap as they do in San Francisco's Folsom Street, mutual hostility may occur. The dress and deportment of passersby provide good clues, as do the names of bars and other commercial establishments which reflect fashionable trends in the gay world. Cinemas are likely to favor camp classics or current films appealing to gay taste. Pedestrian traffic, interlaced with cruising, abounds at all hours, in contrast to most other neighborhoods, where traffic peaks only as residents are leaving for, or returning from,

work. These signs are not lost on interested outsiders. Insurance companies and other businesses are said to pinpoint enclave locations by their particular postal ZIP codes.

Analogous Formations. These enclaves just discussed are characterized by a combination of residential and commercial use. And in fact it is possible for some residents to pass virtually their whole lives within the enclave, working, shopping, banking, and cruising there. There are, however, other more limited zones of "gay space." University districts often host a goodly share of homosexual residents, attracted by their relative tolerance and the cultural amenities. Some are simply students who stayed on, never having formed families which would require larger quarters. Old warehouses, in industrial zones where no one lives, may open at night as bars or discos that attract surprising numbers of people. These locales are chosen for their inconspicuousness, and may not even present a sign on the street, much as Christian churches in old Cairo have their entrances off obscure courtyards so as to maintain a low profile. City parks, which may lie at some distance from the residential-commercial gay enclave, are claimed after a certain hour at night as cruising grounds. In Europe a fragmentary history of such "zones of licence" may be pieced together from the late Middle Ages onwards. A church-sponsored inquiry undertaken in Cologne in 1484, for example, ascertained the presence of sodomites in several areas of the city, at least one of which corresponds to an area still frequented by homosexuals in the early years of the present century. To be sure, changes in favored spots occur for various reasons. Modern methods of transport made railroad depots and bus stations favorite places. Curiously, airport terminals do not seem to fulfill this function, in part because they are not easily reached on foot or by ordinary means of transportation and in part because security is omnipresent. Repeated raids or obtrusive sur-

veillance may make some spots permanently unattractive. The need to use a car need not itself be a bar to the appropriation of "gay space," and is a positive advantage during periods of police "heat." Outside the cities certain commercial strips, highway reststops, and toilets are reachable only by automobile. All these public areas of encounter seem at first bewilderingly diverse, but reflection shows that a key common denominator is the cover rationale that they all provide for loitering. In Europe in former times, churchyards (where one could simulate contemplation of one's sins) and bridges (where fishing served as an excuse) flourished as cruising spots for similar reasons. In traditional Spain ports (Seville, Valencia, Barcelona) were meeting places, as were (probably) inland establishments serving mule drivers.

Some city neighborhoods have bars that serve, say, construction workers during the day, but switch to a gay clientele at night, the daytime patrons being scarcely aware of the double hat that "their" bar is wearing. This time-sharing phenomenon is found in other spheres of urban life, as in the hotels that boast "110 percent occupancy," because they rent rooms for sexual assignations for an hour or two in the middle of the day.

Social Semiotics. Although much attention has been given to the behavioral geography of cities, little work has been done on what might be termed their "gay semiotics." What determines the appropriation and modification of the built environment by male homosexuals and lesbians? How do their kinetic patterns, those of movement and loitering, serve to "stake out" and structure the parts of the city they favor? And finally what mental maps do these individuals form of landmarks and pathways that are significant to them?

Resorts. Differing significantly from the urban gay enclaves and their satellites are what might be termed "enclaves": the gay resorts. Some of these,

located like Key West and Palm Springs in tropical climes, function the year round. Here gay residents and retirees who live there share the towns with transients. In some places the influx of gay tourists, who in their holiday mood may behave more flamboyantly than at home, causes tension with straight "townies," the regular residents; for those in business the influx of dollars is most welcome. On the East Coast, Provincetown, MA, and Fire Island near New York City are seasonal resorts, where the population shrinks to almost nothing in winter. Occupying an intermediate position with respect to seasonal use are the European islands of Ibiza and Mykonos, with their international clientele. Although Italian gay groups sponsor a summer camp each year in the south of their country, there seems as yet no homosexual equivalent of the Club Méditerranée.

Rural Gays. Far from American cities are small settlements, occasionally communes, but usually just farms run by one or two individuals. In some instances these establishments are owned by rural people on inherited family land; most, however, show the influence of the ecology and hippy movements and are worked by one-time urbanites who have fled the stress and pollution of the urban "rat race." Although a slight preference for the western states may be detected (possibly reflecting the mystique of the cowboy as a rugged individualist), these farms and communes are usually geographically isolated; residents communicate with other sympathetic people by mail, telephone, and computer modem. They also have a periodical, *RFD: A Country Journal for Gay Men Everywhere* (Bakersville, NC).

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GEORGE, STEFAN (1868-1933)

German lyric poet. A student of languages, George worked widely, knew Mallarmé and Verlaine in Paris, and was profoundly influenced by Spain. His life and work have a strongly esoteric character, as despising the mass culture of the *fin-de-siècle*, he chose to live amidst a circle of admiring disciples, with and for whom he published the journal *Blätter für die Kunst* (1890-1919). Membership in the circle was conferred on an elite group of men qualified by their handsome and aristocratic bearing. Though certain themes in his work—noble youths, exalted leaders, and a "new Reich"—were interpreted by the National Socialists as akin to their cause, George spurned their advances, going into voluntary exile at the end of his life.

The homosexual aspect of George's work is difficult to define: on the surface it is invisible, at deeper levels omnipresent. By the end of the 1890s he achieved a studied elegance, a perfection of form, a regularity of rhythm and purity of rhyme that remain the hallmarks of his best poetry. His later poems have a prophetic, quasi-mystical character, inspired by his worship of a "divine" youth, Maximin, and a longing to realize in life the vision of the ideal that permeates his poetry, together with a rapturous quality of love. The homosexual strain of the text is never expressed in conventional erotic topoi; rather it is masked by various stratagems that escape the uninitiated reader: gender-neutral language, poems in the genderless second person "Du," allusions to traditionally homosocial groupings such as military or athletic formations, setting the