

leftist) and the Roze Aktie Front, while gay subculture organized itself, setting up gay periodicals (*De Janet van Antwerpen*, *Zonder Pardon*, *Link*, *Antenne Rose-Info*, *Tels Quels*, *Anderzijds*), radio programs, film festivals, and other gay-defined activities, alongside the commercial circuit of gay bars, discos, coffeeshops, and restaurants.

A success of gay activism in Belgium was the repeal in 1986 of the article 372bis of the penal code, which had been introduced in 1965 stipulating eighteen instead of sixteen as the age of consent for homosexual contact.

The relative decline of gay activism in the 1980s showed its vulnerability in an age of health crisis and rising moral judgment. Yet, an AIDS-prevention campaign sponsored by the Department of Health warned against the scapegoating of homosexuals and actually discussed the campaign with FWH and the Roze Dinsdag Beweging, a recent gay activist group. Also, the acquittal of Professor Michel Vincineau, the owner of two gay bathhouses who was prosecuted for "organizing male prostitution," reveals a fairly enlightened public opinion toward the gay community.

Pedophile organization is rather limited; an Antwerp workshop on pedophilia is still active, but a police crusade was launched in February 1987 against CRIES, the Centre de Recherche et d'Information sur l'Enfance et la Sexualité in Brussels.

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Rudi Bleys

BELOVED DISCIPLE

This mysterious figure of the New Testament, sometimes identified with

John the Evangelist, has attracted the attention of some homosexuals as an "affectional ancestor." According to Christian tradition, the Apostle John is the author of the Fourth Gospel, the Book of Revelation (also known as the Apocalypse of St. John), and three of the Catholic Epistles. All these ascriptions have been questioned by modern Biblical criticism, and the consensus is that this group of writings, so different from one another, cannot be by one author. It is traditional to identify as John the unnamed disciple "whom Jesus loved" and who reclined on his bosom at the Last Supper (John 13:23). Again this identification has been denied by some modern scholars.

Depictions of the college of the Apostles in medieval art generally distinguish John as a youthful beardless man, in contrast to his older bearded associates. A special theme of late medieval German sculpture is the Christ-John pair, in which these two figures are excerpted from the Last Supper context with John, identified as the Beloved Disciple, asleep with his head in Christ's lap. These sculptural groups belong to a broad category of devotional imagery, intended for meditation; the groups are probably not homoerotic in any primary sense. It has been shown, however, that they generated a group of mystical texts in which John is spoken of as enjoying the milk of the Lord. This motif may relate to the imagery of Christ as mother.

However this may be, explicit mentions of a physical erotic relationship between the two New Testament figures appear in our documents only in the sixteenth century. According to the playwright Christopher Marlowe (1564-1593), as reported by the informer Richard Baines, "St. John the Evangelist was bedfellow to Christ and leaned always in his bosom, that he used him as the sinners of Sodoma." This blasphemous assertion has a precedent in the confession of a libertine of Venice who was tried about 1550 for believing, among other heresies, that St.

John was Christ's catamite ("cinedo di Cristo"). Thus present research suggests that the idea was diffused from Italian heterodox currents, which are still, however, insufficiently known. In the post-Stonewall years in New York—in the 1970s—the most successful gay religious organization was the Church of the Beloved Disciple. Although the ascription of the orientation is doubtful and unproven, some would place St. John at the head of a host of "gay saints," including St. Sebastian, Sts. Sergius and Bacchus, and St. Aelred of Rievaulx. But the erotic activities and sentiments of these figures are also shadowy, and as yet the ranks of the beatified, as determined by the Roman Catholic church, contain no absolutely bona fide, certified homosexual individual.

Historical research reveals a complex dialectical trajectory of the particular matter in question: first, the identification of John with the anonymous Beloved Disciple; followed by tentative, perhaps largely unconscious medieval hints of a kind of mystical marriage between Christ and his favorite. The carnal element comes into the open in the sixteenth century, but in a scoffing, heretical context. Finally, some modern homosexuals have sought to give a positive interpretation of the presumed relationship as a religious warrant for the dignity of gay love. All these developments reflect a legendary embellishment of laconic scriptural texts. The true relationship of Jesus Christ and his mysterious Beloved Disciple will probably never be known.

**BENEDICT, RUTH F.
(1887–1948)**

American anthropologist. Benedict became known to a large public through her popularized characterizations of whole cultures as having particular personalities. Unsatisfied with a marriage contracted in 1914, she enrolled in the New School for Social Research in 1919

and was influenced by students of Franz Boas (1858–1943) to study with the master himself at Columbia University. She earned her Ph.D. in 1923 with a dissertation on the distribution of the concept of the "guardian spirit" in native North America. In subsequent years as Boas's "right-hand" administrative subordinate and chosen successor she did fieldwork among the Zuñi and Cochiti in the American Southwest.

Although her collections of folklore are known to specialists, *Patterns of Culture* (Boston, 1934), her book applying the "Apollonian" character to the Zuñi and contrasting them to the "Dionysian" Kwakiutl studied by Boas, and the "treacherous" Dobu studied by Reo Fortune, made her famous. This book introduced simplistic characterizations of primitive cultures to a wide audience as a means of demonstrating the variability (and thus malleability) of "human nature"—with passing mention of different conceptions of homosexuality (pp. 262–65). Benedict was noted for a lack of sympathy for male students. She had a coterie of younger women around her, including her most famous student, Margaret Mead (1901–1978), with whom she was sexually, intellectually, and politically involved during the last two decades of her life (both had relationships with other women as well, and Mead with several men, including her three husbands). Aiming to contribute to psychological war efforts, the two pioneered "the study of culture at a distance" during the Second World War, working with persons in New York who had been raised in cultures of strategic interest. Benedict wrote about Romanian and Thai culture, as well as her famous discussion of militarism and aestheticism in Japanese "national character," *The Chrysanthemum and the Sword* (Boston, 1946). As with her characterization of Zuñi as free of conflict, her interpretation of Japan has had numerous specialist critics—and many readers.

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