

precise style and of accurate analysis. Although France has no universal writer like Shakespeare, Cervantes, Dante, and Goethe, Montaigne, who like all of them had a homosexual or at least homoerotic side, is one of the outstanding French writers before the classical age of the seventeenth century. With his elder contemporary François Rabelais (ca. 1494–1553), he helped modernize French prose, soon after his death standardized by the Académie Française, founded in 1635 by Cardinal Richelieu and the homosexual Abbé de Boisrobert.

About 1558 Montaigne, while serving on the parlement of Bordeaux, developed an intense affection for a young judge, Etienne de La Boétie, author of an essay, "Against One Man," honoring liberty against tyrants. This passion inspired his composition "On Friendship" in the *Essais*. There he asserts that friendship is more passionate than the "impetuous and fickle" love for women and superior to marriage, which one can enter at will but not leave. He concedes that physical intimacy between males "is justly abhorred by our moral notions," while the "disparity of age and difference of station" which the Greeks demanded "would not correspond sufficiently to the perfect union that we are seeking here." Montaigne condemns pederasty because of the age asymmetry between the partners, "simply founded on external beauty, the false image of corporeal generation," but approves fully of intense friendship between men of the same age, "friendship that possesses the soul and rules it with absolute sovereignty." In this respect he is a forerunner of modern, age-symmetrical, androphile homosexuality. Physical beauty means less than the "marriage of two minds" such as he contracted with his friend, who died some five years later, in 1563, of dysentery, leaving Montaigne with a memory that haunted him all the rest of his days. Never again would such an enthralling experience befall him, but the great love of

his life underlay his classic essay on friendship.

Also relevant to homosexuality are the "Apology for Raymond Sebond" and "On Some Verses of Vergil." So if Montaigne could not openly defend physical intimacy between men, he at least evoked the ancient ideal of friendship, anticipating the modern notion of homosexuality.

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William A. Percy

MONTESQUIOU, COUNT ROBERT DE (1855–1921)

French aristocrat, poet, and aesthete. Descended from the d'Artagnan of *The Three Musketeers*, he spent most of his wealth on collecting art objects and throwing parties, as well as vanity-press editions of his own books. He was the model for Jean des Esseintes in the novel *A Rebours* by Joris-Karl Huysmans (1884), Phocas in Jean Lorrain's novel *Mons. de Phocas* (1902), the Peacock in Rostand's play "Chantecler" (1910), and Baron de Charlus in Proust's *Sodome et Gomorrhe* (1921), all of which portray his flamboyance and homosexuality. However, he was so afraid of scandal that he avoided associating with notorious homosexuals and was so discreet in his sexual life that there is no proof that he ever had sex with any of the handsome young men in his entourage. The great love of his life was a South American, Gabriel Yturri, whom he met in 1885 and who died in 1905. Montesquiou wrote some poems on homosexual themes. Although he was a glittering center of Parisian society, he is remembered today only as the original of Charlus and des Esseintes, and Giovanni Boldini's portrait of him is on the cover of the Penguin paperback edition of Huysmans' novel.

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Stephen Wayne Foster

MONTHERLANT, HENRY DE (1895–1970)

French novelist, dramatist and essayist. A Parisian by birth, Montherlant was educated in an elite Catholic boarding school, whose atmosphere of particular friendships and ambivalent student-teacher relations left an abiding impression. At the age of sixteen he fell passionately in love with a younger boy—an interest evoked in *La Ville dont le prince est un enfant* (1952) and *Les Garçons* (written in 1929 but published posthumously).

In World War I he used family connections to make sure that he had a taste of combat without really being endangered by it. His first novel, *Le songe* (1922), is an account of the war initiating a lifelong personal cult of virility and courage that many have subsequently found spurious. In ensuing novels, as well as in his plays (1942–65), Montherlant presents resolute heroes and heroines who are steadfast in their confrontation of God and nothingness, embodying audacity, patriotism, purity, and self-sacrifice as opposed to cowardice, hypocrisy, compromise, and self-indulgence. Throughout his life, Montherlant labored to polish an image of a manly stoic, and it was in this key that he took his own life in 1972, as blindness set in.

The posthumous publication of his correspondence with the openly gay novelist Roger Peyrefitte threw a new light on Montherlant, one that could only prove disconcerting to many of his erstwhile admirers. In April 1938 the thirty-one-year old Peyrefitte met Montherlant, then forty three, at an amusement arcade in Place Clichy in Paris. Both had discovered independently that, in a Paris that had still not entirely recovered from the Depression, these commercial undertakings provided good opportunities for picking up impoverished teenaged boys, taking them

to the movies, and then home to bed. Montherlant soon fell in with one particular youth, who was fourteen, with the knowledge of the boy's mother. Although not a novice in these matters, the older novelist came to rely on Peyrefitte's advice as to how to conduct the affair. After Montherlant settled in the south of France, their friendship continued on a weekly, sometimes daily postal basis, though with verbal dodges to fool the censor. Through the tragic events of the declaration of war, the defeat of France, and the beginning of the Occupation, the two remained obsessively preoccupied with their affairs with boys. Both men got into scrapes with the authorities, but while Montherlant was able to use influence to smooth things over, Peyrefitte lost his job with the Quai d'Orsay.

Although a first version of the novel *Les Garçons* was written in 1929, the full text, which shows the pupils of Sainte-Croix in an almost frantic ballet of love affairs with each other (though not with the teachers), did not appear until after the writer's death. The book captures the sultry mixture of passion, religion, and (a very definite third) study in an elite French school as well, if not better than any other in this well populated genre. Before his death Montherlant seems to have foreseen that the truth about himself would come out, and even to have given this process some anticipatory encouragement.

In their lives Montherlant and Peyrefitte offer a vivid contrast: the one striving to retain and even polish the mask of heterosexuality, the other frank about his homosexuality from his first novel, *Les amitiés particulières* (1945). Yet after Montherlant's death a truer picture has emerged, and the divergent perspectives of work and life have become visible without growing together. In fact his work abounds in divided characters: a colonial officer who does not believe in imperialism, an artist who does not care for painting, a priest for whom God is an illusion, and an