

ity; both terms are oversimplifications of a social role they clearly did not understand.

Contemporary examples can be found in Turkey (*köçek*) and in Oman (*khanith*), and probably throughout the entire Middle East. Other societies of the past and present have presented similar phenomena: the constellation of homosexual prostitution, cross-dressing, singing and dancing is reported from Greece and China, and the hijra in India also appear similar. These transcultural similarities should be carefully studied, for the presence of general similarities may conceal more important differences.

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Maarten Schild

**MUNRO, HECTOR HUGH**  
(PSEUDONYM SAKI;  
1870-1916)

British fiction writer, playwright, and journalist. Saki is best known for his witty and exquisitely crafted short stories, which often satirize the mores of Edwardian society, or describe a world of supernatural horror underlying the tranquil English countryside.

Munro was born in Burma, the son of a career officer in the British military police. Following the death of his mother when he was two, he and his older siblings, Ethel Mary and Charles Arthur, were sent to live with his grandmother and two aunts in western England. Though an old Scottish family with aristocratic pretensions, the Munros had only a modest income. Nevertheless, the boys were raised to be gentlemen, and throughout his life Munro thought and wrote as a Tory. The despotism and intolerance of the aunts informed a recurrent theme of his fiction:

the tyranny of dullards over their natural superiors, and the eventual revenge and triumph of the latter.

Munro was educated at Exmouth and at Bedford grammar school. In 1887 his father retired from the military, returned to England, and took his three children on a series of travels throughout Europe. In Davos, Switzerland, Hector Hugh, then eighteen years old and uncommonly attractive, was a frequent visitor at the home of John Addington Symonds, a prominent British writer who was the foremost authority on "masculine love" among the ancient Greeks. Munro appears to have accepted Symonds as his mentor in matters of literary style as well as sexual philosophy.

In 1893 Munro joined the military police in Burma. Here he observed the exotic customs of the inhabitants, and acquired a collection of animals, including a tiger cub. He discovered the advantages of having a houseboy, and throughout the rest of his life was seldom without one. Contracting malaria, he was invalided out of the service. He then turned to journalism, writing satirical pieces for the *Westminster Gazette*. He adopted the pen name, Saki, a word with esoteric homoerotic connotations. (Poems by Hafiz and other Sufi writers, as well as by Goethe in his collection, *West-östlicher Diwan*, are addressed to the "saki" or cupbearer, a beautiful boy, the object of male desire.)

After a number of years as a foreign correspondent for *The Morning Post*, Munro settled in London. Here he wrote a series of short stories: *Reginald* (1904), *Reginald in Russia* (1910), *The Chronicles of Clovis* (1912), and *Beasts and Super-Beasts* (1914). The stories are in turn playful, cynical, uncanny, and hilariously funny—a singular blend of urbanity and paganism. At their best, they represent the highest of high camp.

Though Munro's penchant for young men was well known, he was neither secretive nor blatant. The short stories contain numerous sly allusions to the

"unmentionable vice" and occasional flashes of homoeroticism. The two most prominent characters, Reginald (no last name) and Clovis Sangrail, are dandies. Reginald is a vain and good looking young man, with nice eyelashes, who compares himself with *Ganymede*, wears "a carnation of the newest shade", and takes special delight in shocking people. A few of his epigrams have become famous ("To have reached thirty is to have failed in life."). At the same time that Reginald is courted by both men and women, he himself has an interest in lift boys, gardener boys, choir boys, and page boys. Clovis Sangrail, a bit older and more sophisticated, frequents the Jermyn Street baths (as did Munro himself) and is an admirer of male beauty, in others as well as himself.

Among the gayer stories are *Gabriel-Ernest* (a masterpiece which can be read on at least three different levels: a werewolf horror story, a comedy, and a parable of pederastic temptation), *Adrian*, *The Music on the Hill*, *Reginald's Choir Treat*, *The Innocence of Reginald*, and *Quail Seed*. A central figure in *Quail Seed* is a boy, "about sixteen years old, with dark olive skin, large dusky eyes, and thick, low-growing, blue-black hair" who works as an "artist's model"; the story concludes with the artist's statement: "We enjoyed the fun of it, and as for the model, it was a welcome variation on posing for hours for 'The Lost Hylas.'"

When World War I broke out, Munro, then 43 years old, enlisted in the army. Rejecting several offers of a commission, he remained in the ranks. His two years at the front, in the company of young working class men, were apparently the happiest time of his life. He was killed by a sniper's bullet in 1916, his last words being: "Put that damn cigarette out!"

His sister Ethyl, in her *Biography of Saki*, wrote his epitaph: "He had a tremendous sympathy for young men strug-

gling to get on, and in practical ways helped many a lame dog."

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John Lauritsen

## MURDERERS

More homosexuals have been the victims of murder than its instigators, but the popular imagination has seized on certain sensational exceptions to promulgate the legend of the lust-driven, anti-social sadist preying on young men. Cheap fiction likes to show the homosexual murderer as effete and flamboyant, but this is seldom true in reality. Occasionally, as in the case of Kenneth Halliwell, lover and slayer of the playwright Joe Orton, the violent act is a domestic crime of passion, the culmination of long self-loathing and humiliation. More often, the motive is profit, as when a hustler kills a john in his apartment: the files of the European police are packed with such cases going back to the eighteenth century. Homosexual *Lustmord* or sexual murder is less common than believed, and its practitioners rarely carry on lengthy torture sessions. Serial killers are generally closeted, with an emotional life arrested in childhood; their murders may be violent, but are often prompted by an inability to make emotional contact with another human being. They are unilateral in their taking of sexual pleasure and unimaginative in the recurrent patterns of their crimes.

The earliest criminals on record to mix homicide and homosex are monarchs or nobility, whose power enabled the crimes and whose prominence lent them notoriety. Zu Shenatir, fifth-century tyrant of El-Yemen, enticed young men and boys to his palace, sodomized them, and tossed them out of windows. He is alleged to have died, stabbed through the anus by the youth Zerash. Tipu Sahib (1751-1799),