

even be a later grafting onto the earlier torso of legend.

The Fortunes of Orpheus. The Middle Ages had a curiously divided concept of Orpheus. To some early Christian writers, such as Clement of Alexandria, the element of cosmic harmony seemed uppermost, and he was even compared to Christ. During the later Middle Ages, however, the singer was subject to moralization: as a sodomite, he was seen as deserting his fate.

It was left to the neo-Platonic circles of fifteenth-century Florence, with their fondness for merging pagan wisdom with a rarified Christianity, to rehabilitate Orpheus as seer, musician, and lover of men. The Greek Orphic hymns, now read once more, were hailed as evidence of Orpheus' skill as a mystical theologian. In 1480, apparently, Angelo Poliziano (Politian) created for the court of Mantua his brilliant short play, *La Favola di Orfeo*. At Mantua Poliziano could have inspected the frescoes of the life and death of Orpheus done by Andrea Mantegna six years before. In his play Poliziano boldly states that after losing Eurydice Orpheus turned with great zest to his own sex. The Italian humanist's description of Orpheus' later career echoes the Latin poet Ovid, with some touches of his own. A lover of youths, Orpheus "plucks the new flowers, the springtime of the better sex when men are all lithe and slender."

The finest artistic representation of the revived ancient Orpheus is by a northern painter, Albrecht Dürer. In a masterly drawing of 1494 he reworked an earlier Mantegna design to show a heroic Orpheus—virtually a pagan martyr—dying at the hands of frenzied maenads. The banderole contains a German inscription reading "Orfeus der erst puseran" (Orpheus the first bugger), a blunt expression by which Dürer acknowledged the musician's distinction as the inventor of homosexuality.

In the second half of the sixteenth century the chill winds of the Counterre-

formation gradually suppressed knowledge of the homoerotic themes of classical antiquity. Thus Ottavio Rinuccini's Florentine opera *Euridice* of 1600 deals only with the married Orpheus—he even brought Eurydice back to her husband in a happy ending. This tradition of suppressing his later career has been generally followed in all the arts. Toward the end of the nineteenth century there was a revival of the tragic Orpheus, as seen in paintings by Odilon Redon and Álvarez de Sotomayor, but usually as an emblem of the alienated artist, and not as a sexual innovator. To the modern gay movement was left the task of reviving the homoerotic Orpheus.

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Wayne R. Dynes

ORTON, JOE (JOHN KINGSLEY) (1933–1967)

English playwright and novelist.

In the 1960s, Orton's works shocked British audiences and had a significant impact on the direction of contemporary drama, despite the slender canon he had produced before he was bludgeoned to death in 1967 by his long-time lover, Kenneth Halliwell, in a murder–suicide, sparked by artistic as well as sexual jealousies.

Orton, self-educated under Halliwell's guidance after the two met while students at the Royal Academy of Dramatic Arts, offered a cynical view of human nature, grounded in violence, sexuality, exploitation, greed, narcissism, and ruthlessness, in plays that are nonetheless witty, urbane, and stylized. An artistic descendent of Oscar Wilde, Orton wrote drama that can be thought of as either

social farce, moral satire, or ethical parody—or all three simultaneously. His dramatic world is comedic, but blackly so, and homosexuality pervades the sex-infused world of his theatre, in every work he produced.

Before his and Halliwell's conviction and jail sentence in 1962 for defacing library books (a situation worthy of an Orton plot), he had written little, collaborating with his lover on the manuscripts of four unpublished novels. After his release, however, Orton began to write furiously, affected both by incarceration and his first separation from Halliwell. In 1964, he wrote *The Ruffian on the Stair* and his brilliant *Entertaining Mr. Sloane*, the latter a touchstone to his vision of inherent human depravity as a brother and sister try to outmaneuver each other to seduce the charmingly dangerous young man who has begun to dominate and exploit them and their home. Also in 1964, he completed *Loot*, whose 1966 production made him a celebrity, and his television play, *The Good and Faithful Servant*, an unusually bitter examination of the condition of the working classes—if still quite witty in form. In 1966, he wrote *The Erpingham Camp* and an unproduced screenplay for the Beatles, *Up Against It*; in 1967, Orton produced another television play, *Funeral Games*, and the play many consider to be his finest achievement, *What the Butler Saw*, staged posthumously in 1969. His only other independent work was a novel completed in 1961, *The Vision of Gombold Proval*, published in 1971 as *Head to Toe*.

Orton's drama was designed to shock and disorient, motives clearly revealed in the diaries he kept, and his work accomplished just that: it challenged the comfortable assumptions of London's traditional and safe West End and offered theatre audiences an amoral view of themselves with an impact and shock of recognition unmitigated by its witty and intelligent presentation. As a boost to the "school of anger" of the previous decade, Orton's drama coupled with the works of

Harold Pinter (one of the few fellow dramatists Orton admired) to jar the British theatre from the complacency that had characterized it for the many years previous, allowing both America and France to forge ahead into much more adventurous dramatic territory.

Orton, however, never believed his plays were as outrageous and improbable as did his audiences and critics, for his diaries demonstrate that much of his vision came directly from his own life rather than from fanciful literary imagination. For example, his addiction to sexual encounters in public toilets explains much about the pervasion of anonymous and indifferent sexuality in his written work. Had he lived, his would have no doubt been one of the most pervasive presences in the drama of the last two decades, but his few works have still had a profound influence in shaping the dual vision of current drama and its multiplicity of effect.

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Rodney Simard

OWEN, WILFRED (1893–1918)

English poet. Born in Oswestry, Shropshire, Owen was educated at the Birkenhead Institute, Liverpool, and at University College, Reading. His relationship with his affectionate, devout but not intellectual mother was the closest of his life, but a source of many difficulties. Despite her hopes and prayers Owen did not become a clergyman but even lost his faith. A tutor at Bordeaux at the moment World War I broke out, he returned to England and enlisted in the Artists' Rifles in 1915. In January 1917 he was sent to the Somme with the 2nd Battalion Manchester Regiment. He was soon recording