

taboo subject, including revelation of police payoffs, in turn engendered a backlash in which the police arrested large numbers of gay men and lesbians in sweeps in the bars. Gay organizations, including the Society for Individual Rights (SIR) and the Tavern Guild, found an unexpected source of support in sympathetic members of the clergy, who formed the Council on Religion and the Homosexual in 1964. The gay leaders and church people combined to monitor and eventually stem the homophobic backlash.

*Maturity.* Although San Francisco's gay community was well advanced in many respects by the late sixties, New York's *Stonewall Rebellion* of 1969, coming in the wake of the Civil Rights movement and the anti-Vietnam War movement, represented a national watershed which can also be used to divide historical periods in San Francisco. Attention in the mainstream media was reinforced by the brash input of new "underground" *Counterculture* publications such as the *Berkeley Barb*, as well by a series of newspapers written by and for homosexuals. In the late 1970s San Francisco alone boasted four gay newspapers. Under the direction of Winston Leyland the journal *Gay Sunshine* turned into a major gay press, issuing books of all kinds. In the scholarly realm Professor John De Cecco established a center for the study of sexuality at San Francisco State University, where he edited a research tool of great prestige, the *Journal of Homosexuality*.

Three neighborhoods emerged as gay zones. Polk Street gulch was the oldest and most traditional of these. Eventually it was surpassed by the Castro, with its stereotypical clone type. Finally, Folsom Street became the center for those committed to, or dabbling in, the leather and S/M subculture. Backrooms and glory hole establishments for impersonal sex proliferated, and the income generated by tourists soared. Yet old-line politicians continued to deplore San Francisco's reputation as "Sodom by the Bay."

For their part gay men and lesbians had not neglected politics, but this realm was galvanized and transformed by the energies of an outsider from New York, Harvey Milk [1930–1978], who owned a shop on Castro Street. To the dismay of the city's established gay leaders, Milk forged an improbable but solid alliance with the city's blue-collar unions. His methods were often amateurish, sometimes even unethical, but they worked, and he was elected Supervisor on his third try in 1977.

Triumph turned to tragedy when Milk was murdered a year later, together with Mayor George Moscone, by a resentful former colleague and police officer, Dan White. When a jury acquitted White of the most serious charges after an inept prosecution, widespread riots erupted in the vicinity of City Hall, and some gay activists were seen setting fire to police cars. Milk was replaced by Harry Britt, another gay officeholder, and the lesson dawned on the city's straight establishment that gay power had come to stay.

After 1981 the AIDS crisis hit San Francisco particularly hard, but new organizations and coalitions arose to cope with the medical emergency. A prolonged controversy led to the closing of San Francisco's gay bathhouses. Even without these events, some dimming of the exuberance and sheer craziness of the 1970s was probably inevitable. Despite bickering, however, San Francisco's gay infrastructure held firm and seemed destined to remain a major part of the city's life.

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Ward Houser

## SANTAYANA, GEORGE (1863–1952)

American poet and philosopher. Born in Madrid, he came to the United States at the age of nine. He graduated from Harvard College *summa cum laude*

in the class of 1886. From 1889 he taught philosophy at Harvard, and in 1907 was appointed professor there. In 1912 he retired and spent the remainder of his life abroad, mainly in France and Italy.

Having had to learn English at the age of nine, Santayana had a firm command of the literary language, but not the spontaneity in diction that marks the true poet in his mother tongue. His verse diction was a pastiche of **Shakespeare**, Shelley, Keats, and **Tennyson**, together with Victorian translations of the classics. The poetic outcome was sentimental, insincere, and abstract. As a philosopher Santayana was unoriginal in logic, taking his ideas from **Plato** and Leibniz. He rebelled against the tradition of American **philosophy** with its Calvinist background, which made the philosopher the moral guide of the community, a clergyman without a church. Santayana created no school of philosophy, though he was appreciated by his pupils at Harvard; he was an excellent lecturer, his voice even and melodious, his diction perfect, his whole manner aristocratic.

The content of his philosophy was that reality has different levels that cannot be forced into a comprehensive, universally valid scheme. For the purpose of giving his thought a realistic basis, he located that particular form of reality at the material level, but claimed that vital, spiritual, and ideal entities have qualitative traits of their own and cannot be reduced to material elements. The material realm of facts is wholly independent of the ideal realm of essences, as well as of their specific modes of apprehension. Beauty is a pure essence, whose contemplation cancels out the struggle for existence and forms the noblest and happiest human experience. Human reason is unable to penetrate intuitively into the regions of existence beyond the senses, but from this skeptical position Santayana developed a pragmatic attitude which he judged one of "common sense," one that accepts the possibilities and limits that its

material origin imposes upon the human mind. Human institutions are tokens of the progress of the human spirit that is realized thanks to the growth of consciousness, from the primitive forms of human experience to its highest stages, a growth that is based in human nature itself.

In a genteel society where all sexuality was suspect, Santayana frankly preferred homosexuality to heterosexuality. He referred scornfully to the outcome of heterosexuality as "breeding," while studiously maintaining a façade of coldness and detachment that hid his true feelings from a scornful world. His first love was a Harvard undergraduate named Ward Thoron, seventeen, and three years younger than himself. All his love poems, beginning with a sonnet to Thoron, betray an origin in genuine homosexual emotion usually veiled in Christian imagery and allusion, or by the convenient fiction that the love object belonged to the opposite sex. He later admitted that he must have been homosexual in his Harvard days, like **A. E. Housman**, although he was "unconscious of it at the time." This may simply mean that the new concept of homosexuality, which reached the general public only after 1886, did not become part of his self-definition until later. Certainly no one of his urbanity and familiarity with the Greek and Roman classics could have been ignorant of the pederastic moods of the ancient world. Writing of this at the age of twenty-four, he asserted that *paiderasteia* "has been often preferred by impartial judges, like the ancients and orientals, yet our prejudices against are so strong that it hardly comes under the possibilities for us." Later he could speak of the profound irrationality of love in terms that reflect his homosexual experience. Outsiders like Charles W. Eliot, the President of Harvard, suspected the abnormality of Santayana's character, though they veiled their criticisms in disapproval of his "unworldliness." His gradual withdrawal and then departure from a still puritanic America was an immersion in a warm humanity

and Old World wisdom that American culture and simple prudence both forbade. His novel *The Last Puritan* (1935) has a character who is washed out of midshipmen's training school in the Royal Navy for being implicated in a homosexual scandal aboard ship. Today Santayana's reputation has considerably faded, yet he retains interest as a homosexual academic philosopher who after inner struggle against the intolerance of the American society in which he lived, then sought a more congenial atmosphere in the urbanity of the Old World.

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### SAPPHO (CA. 612–CA. 560 B.C.)

Classical Greek poet. Celebrated in antiquity as the "tenth Muse," Sappha, as she styled herself in the Aeolic dialect, was born at Eresus on the island of Lesbos, or according to others, in Mytilene. The daughter of Scamandronymus, she had three brothers, one of whom, Larichus, was appointed cupbearer in the prytaneum of Mytilene because of his remarkable beauty. Political struggles on Lesbos forced Sappho into exile in Sicily, but in time she returned to her homeland and there became mistress of a school for daughters of the aristocracy that achieved such fame as to attract pupils from distant parts of the Hellenic world of the early sixth century B.C.

To understand Sappho's life and creative personality is especially difficult for the modern reader because of the enormous cultural distance that separates the milieu in which she loved and immortalized her love in poetry from that of the lesbian of today. In antiquity, and perhaps in all of historic time, she ranks as the outstanding singer of woman's love for her own sex, but this was expressed as an age-asymmetrical relationship that exactly

paralleled the *paidon eros*, the love of a man for an adolescent boy. It was not an unconventional, bohemian passion, but was inspired by the *eros paidagogikos*, the attachment of the teacher for the protégé. And so far from being reproved by religion, the affection was consecrated to Aphrodite, the goddess of love.

Sappho's poetry, edited by the Alexandrian scholars in nine books, has survived only in fragments, some preserved in quotations in later authors, some recovered on papyri buried for two thousand years in the Egyptian sands. It is an intensely personal lyric poetry, saturated with the unutterable happiness of love and also the unbearable pain of rejection. Of all her girls the dearest was Atthis, and even from the imperfect remains of her poetry the love of the woman for the girl emerges with crystal splendor. Out of the anguish of her heart the poet invokes Aphrodite to float down from heaven and relieve her sorrow. Sappho was drawn to her pupils when they were barely emerging from girlhood, when the hour of their betrothal and marriage was still far distant. When they had outgrown this stage in their lives and were on the threshold of womanhood, Sappho composed epithalamia. Assembled in the ninth and last book of her poems, they symbolize her acquiescence in their passage to a new life as mistresses of aristocratic households. A whole set of poems is devoted to the theme of her resignation to the loss of her beloved pupil, her *eromene*.

Lesbian love played the same role in Sappho's circle as did Dorian *paiderasteia* in Sparta. It was the younger partner's first experience with love, and a step in her initiation to womanhood through intimacy with an older member of her own sex, but also a stage that she would leave behind when she passed on to her adult role as wife and mother. The circle of girls with their headmistress and lover formed a *thiasos*, a cultic union that recited the myths which had already received concrete form in the Homeric poems and performed rites