

in honor of their divine patroness. The mythical is the collective, the shared element of Sappho's poetry and the counterpoise to her individual outpourings of emotion.

Even if Sappho's poetry comes at a comparatively early stage of Greek literary history, it stems ultimately from a long tradition in the Aegean and Near Eastern worlds. The artistic perfection of her writing was made possible by thousands of years of poetic composition in Akkadian, Egyptian, and other languages in which men had sung the beauty of women. In the annals of civilization Sappho stands almost midway between the absolute beginning and the modern era, and the legacy of the past brought her craft to its peak of greatness.

Posterity has dealt ambiguously with Sappho's life and work. Leaving aside the dishonesty and hypocrisy of later critics under the influence of the **Judeo-Christian tradition**, comic authors of antiquity, who in a manner incomprehensible to moderns equated the woman attracted to her own sex with one who takes the aggressive role in relations with men, had Sappho marry Cercylas (from *cercos*, "penis") of Andros ("the city of men"), and invented the story that she committed suicide when rejected by Phaon, the man whose love she craved, by leaping into the sea, a literal interpretation of the metaphor "to spring from the Leucadian rock into the sea," meaning to purify the soul of passions. Generations of classical scholars abused these bits of ancient wit to construct the preposterous image of a heterosexual Sappho whose unconventional love was a legend fabricated by slander or even by misogyny, and their falsehoods continue to be parroted in standard reference works.

For the more discerning, Sappho's poetry has been a perennial inspiration to literary creation. The Latin poets, who could read the entire corpus of her work, often imitated it. The frankly homoerotic component of her poems ultimately, in

the nineteenth century, made "lesbian" the designation for a woman enamored of her own sex, and Magnus Hirschfeld appropriately entitled his first pamphlet (1896) on the homosexual question *Sappho and Socrates*.

The significance of Sappho's legacy for the modern lesbian movement is another issue. To identify the Lesbian writer's korophilic affection for her school-girls with the love of two adult women for each other is as misleading as to equate Greek pederasty with modern androphile homosexuality. The one and the other thrive in a cultural context that belonged to their time and place—not that of the resurgent homophile movement of the twentieth century. But to disavow the heritage of ancient Greece is impossible, because it is one of the wellsprings of Western civilization, and every one of its values is a latent value capable of being revived and reinstated, even if in a different form. A creative figure of Hellenic and Mediterranean civilization, Sappho gave lesbian love its classic literary expression, and her work is an enduring part of the poetic treasure of humanity.

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SARTRE, JEAN-PAUL (1905–1980)

French philosopher, novelist, playwright, essayist, and political activist. Sartre, who enjoyed a life-long partnership with Simone de Beauvoir (herself a major contributor to modern feminism), never had a homosexual experience, as far as is known. Yet as the dominant figure in

French intellectual life in the third quarter of the century, his thoughtful attitude toward the phenomenon, in combination with his sympathy for other marginalized groups, helped to prepare the way for the flourishing of France's gay community after 1968.

Sartre's understanding of homosexuality, like his perception of the situation of women, evolved slowly. His early story "Childhood of a Leader" (1938) portrays a spoiled upper-class boy who is seduced in preparatory school by an older student, and then joins a parafascist organization by way of compensation. Although not directly homophobic, this presentation did tend to lend some support to the theory (reflected also in Alberto Moravia's *The Conformist*) that there is a link between early homosexual experience and right-wing commitment: the **fascist perversion**. Included in the play *No Exit* (1944) is an articulate lesbian, Inès Serrano. In Sartre's novel sequence *Les chemins de la liberté* (1945–49), the homosexual character Daniel shows a fascination with militarism and fascism: he welcomes the German occupation.

His one major nonfiction study of a minority, *Anti-Semite and Jew* (1946), offers a number of interesting perspectives; in fact, inasmuch as it views the Jews as fundamentally defined by the enviroing hostility of society, his analysis may be (mutatis mutandis) better applicable to homosexuals than to its ostensible subject. However, Sartre's major involvement with homosexual questions arose from his association with Jean Genet, to whom he had been introduced by Jean Cocteau. Sartre's project of writing a preface to one of his friend's works grew into a sprawling 600-page book (*Saint-Genet: comédien et martyr*, 1952), in which the philosopher discusses issues of freedom and self-understanding from an existentialist standpoint. Genet's atypical experience, as foundling, thief, and worshipper at the shrine of the dominant male, may

have skewed Sartre's view of an identity in which he had no immediate personal stake.

In 1971 Sartre assumed, at some risk to himself, responsibility for publishing the manifesto of the Front Homosexuel d'Action Révolutionnaire, a radical **gay-liberation** group. Nine years later he gave an interview to two French gay journalists. In the colloquy he acknowledged that some key characters in his work, such as Mathieu in *Chemins de la liberté* and Roquentin in *Nausée*, were uncertain of their masculinity, an uncertainty that corresponded to the writer's own sense of self. He likened becoming homosexual to becoming a writer as two creative responses to otherwise intolerable pressure. As regards the status of homosexuals in France in 1980 ("this prudish society"), he held that they should renounce the hope of blending in and remain aloof, seeking "a kind of free space, where they can come together among themselves, as in the United States, for example."

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SATIATION THEORY

The traditional critique of luxury holds that indulgence in one vice, even a relatively mild one, sets the tyro on a path toward ever more serious involvement. In the modern language of addiction, one develops a tolerance to the intake of the entry-level stage, causing one to increase the dose, to which one then develops a new tolerance, and so on. For writers of nineteenth-century popular medical tracts, **masturbation** was the first step toward ruin; the practiced pervert, in this view, always began by laying "violent hands" on himself.

In the Old Testament, Ezekiel 16:49 links the sodomites with other forms