

of five homoerotic or bisexual publications, led by *Mithuna* [bi], *Mithuna, Jr.* [gay], and *Neon* [gay], a regular radio program broadcast from Bangkok, and the beginnings of gay literary output in the form of novels and short stories.

Attitudes on homosexuality show marked differences by class, relating to power positions. While there appears to be no "queerbashing" violence directed against homosexuality, there seems to be a considerable amount of coercion, abuse of authority positions, and rape of males. Peter Jackson comments that "the lessened resistance to having sex with a man means that male rape or sexual attacks on men appear to be significantly more common than in the West." As in other cultures, however, rape of males is a taboo subject and is not reported to authorities.

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THEATRE AND DRAMA

As public performance, accessible to a wide range of spectators, the theatre has been more subject to the constraints of censorship than any other long-established art. It is expected to confirm and endorse standard social values and to present the heterodox or the taboo in a manner which will incite either derision or revulsion. Consequently, homosexual sentiments, behavior and concerns have, until recently, rarely appeared on stage; when they have, their presentation has often been skewed to the expectations and sensibilities of convention-bound playgoers.

At the same time, the practicing theatre, in its gregariousness, its opportunities for artistic creativity, and its relative tolerance, has been, at least from the sixteenth century, both in Western and Eastern cultures, an arena where talented

homosexuals have flourished. From the ancient Romans until very recently, performers were distrusted as outcasts, misfits in the scheme of things: the outlaw actor and the sexual heretic were often the same individual (and some psychiatrists are fond of equating the actor's egoist exhibitionism with an alleged homosexual love of display).

As homosexuality has become more conspicuous in everyday life, the stage, traditionally regarded as the mirror of life, has portrayed it more openly, both as a subject worthy of dramatic treatment and as an attitude that informs the production.

Ancient Greek Theatre. Greek classical theatre developed in a culture saturated with homoerotic attitudes and behaviors, but owing, perhaps, to deliberate excision by Byzantine and monastic librarians, there is little surviving evidence of these aspects in drama. Lost tragedies include Aeschylus' *Laius* (467 B.C.), about the man thought by the Greeks to have invented pederasty; *Niobe*, which displayed the love-life of Niobe's sons; and *Myrmidons*, concerning Achilles' grief at the death of his lover Patroclus. This last was a favorite of Aristophanes, who quoted it frequently. Other lost plays on the Myrmidon theme were written by Philemon (436/5–379 B.C.) and Strattis (409–375 B.C.). Sophocles, too, wrote *Lovers of Achilles*, whose surviving fragment describes the intricate workings of passion. The oft-dramatised tragedy of the house of Labdacus was, in the earlier myths, triggered by Laius' lust-motivated abduction of the son of his host during his foreign exile. Sophocles eschewed this episode, but it was the subject of Euripides' lost *Chrysippus* (ca. 409 B.C.), apparently created as a vehicle for his own male favorite Agathon (447–400/399 B.C.), who was noted for his "aesthetic" way of life. (Another lost *Chrysippus* was composed by Strattis.) Euripides' masterpiece *The Bacchae* (405 B.C.) depicts the androgynous god Dionysus unsexing and de-

menting his antagonist and kinsman Pentheus, before he sends him to his doom.

But whereas the love and lust of man for man was considered worthy of tragic treatment, effeminate manners were the stuff of comedy: Gnesippus was ridiculed for inappropriately using a tragic chorus of effeminate. The successful comic poet Eupolis (445–ca. 415 B.C.) was attracted to this theme; his *Those Who Dye Their Hair* (*Baptai*; 416/15 B.C.) satirized members of the circle of Alcibiades, who was rumored to have had him drowned for it. Surviving fragments suggest that they were ritual transvestites who spoke an obscene lingo of their own in ceremonies worshipping the goddess Cotytto. Eupolis' *The Flatterers* (*Kolakes*) (431 B.C.), a satire on parasitism with sidelights on compliant sexuality, won first prize over Aristophanes' *Peace*.

The comedies of Aristophanes teem with references to pederasty and cross-dressing. Although his earthy heroes have no hesitation in declaring what fun it is to watch naked boys at the gymnasium and to fondle their scrotums, the effeminate (*euryproktos* or "broad-ass") is mercilessly mocked. In *The Clouds* (423 B.C.), for instance, Right Reason rhapsodizes on the "moisture and down" that bloom on a youth's genitals "as on quinces" and wins his argument. Yet Cleisthenes is regularly made a laughingstock for his lady-like carrying-on, and the central device of the *Women's Festival* (*Thesmo-phoriazousai*) (411 B.C.) is to have the protagonist disguise himself as a woman, under Cleisthenes' instruction, thus running the danger of being bugged when captured and bound.

Roman Theatre. Buggery on compulsion remained a standard comic topos in the Mediterranean basin. In Roman comedy, Plautus' characters mistake one another for eunuchs and effeminate; his *Casina* (ca. 190–180 B.C.), in particular, is packed with jokes, puns and equivocations on the theme. Sodomy frequently crops up in the farcical *fabula togata*, es-

pecially those of Lucius Afranius (fl. later second century of our era), credited to have introduced homosexuality into the genre. Among the later Greeks, actors were respected as artists (Mary Renault's novel *The Mask of Apollo* offers a persuasive recreation); but in Rome, they were legally classified as "infamous," even if popularly regarded as desirable sexual catches. The Emperors Caligula, Nero, and Trajan often took their male bedmates from the ranks of actors, dancers, and mimes; the last became notorious for the indecency of their performances. To increase the eroticism of their shows, the mimes introduced women on stage in what had hitherto been an exclusively male preserve.

The Orient. In the Oriental theatre, women were frequently banned from the stage, either for religious or moralistic reasons; the resultant professional female impersonator, the *tan* of China's Peking Opera, introduced in the reign of Ch'ien Lung (1735–1796), and the *onnagata* of Japan's Kabuki theatre, replacing boy players after 1652, exercised a pseudo-female allure. In China actors, no matter what they played, were frequently prostitutes, sought after by statesmen and scholars: among the most famous of these actor-favorites were Chin Feng (fl. 1590), Wei Ch'ang-sheng (fl. 1780), and Ch'en Yin-kuan (fl. 1790). The boy acting-troupes of nineteenth-century China were often equated with male brothels, and certainly the boys' looks were regarded as more important than their talent. But these pedophilic passions were never reflected in the Chinese dramatic repertory. On the Kabuki stage, on the other hand, a bisexual love affair is the pivot of *Tsuwamono Tongen Sogo* (1697), and a homosexual one comprises a subplot in *Asakusa Reigenki*.

The most popular Korean entertainment form before 1920 was the Namsadang, a traveling troupe of variety performers; a homosexual commune of 40 to 50 males, it has been described as the "voice of the common people" (Young Ja Kim). The company was divided into sut-

dongmo ("butch") and *yodongmo* ("queen") members, the novices serving the elders and playing the female roles. Despite Confucian disapproval of pederasty, the troupe's sexual identity did not put off village audiences, probably because its status as an outcast group made conventional standards irrelevant to it. The institutionalized homosexuality of the Namsadang raises questions about similar itinerant companies in ancient and medieval Europe, and has an analogue in the enforced male bonding of acrobat troupes. Late nineteenth-century commentators on the circus noted that homosexual relationships were common among gymnasts and aerialists, a combination of physical contact and the need for trust. Bands of mummery and mountebanks may have shared such an ethos.

The Middle Ages and Beginnings of the Modern Theatre in Europe. Christianity was antagonistic to the theatre, partly on grounds of immorality; **Clement of Alexandria** specifically rebuked the obscenity of mimes who brought *cinaedia* or male prostitution on stage. When the theatre in Europe was reborn from the Church, the religious teleology of the drama precluded treatment of illicit love, except in imitation of the classics. Nor was the burning of Sodom ever treated by the mystery plays, although Jesuit school-drama in the Baroque age would dramatize it with accompanying fireworks, as in Cornelius a Marca's *Bustum Sodomae* (Ghent, 1615). The Renaissance revived the comic treatment of homosexuality, first in ribald farces by Bolognese students, mocking burghers and clergy: one of these is Ugolino Pisani's *Philogenia* (after 1435), wherein the boy hustler Epifebo deploys his charms to snare the venal priest Prodigio.

Sexual ambiguity is the basis of "gender-confusion" comedy in which a male or female character disguises him/herself as the opposite sex and attracts the amorous attentions of the "wrong" sex. The archetype is Bernardo Dovizi da

Bibbiena's (1470–1520) bawdy *La Calandria* (1513), but it was a common device in *commedia dell'arte* as well as in *commedia erudita*. Involuntary buggery remained a basic joke: in Niccolò Machiavelli's (1469–1527) *La Clizia* (1525), old Nicomaco is sodomized in his sleep by his servant Siro. Pietro Aretino's *Il Marescalco* (1526/7) features a pederastic hero, a chief groom of the stables who is obliged by his master to marry a woman only to find to his great relief that the bride is a boy (this served as a source of Ben Jonson's *Epicoene*, 1609).

Although Spanish Golden Age drama dropped the homosexual references when it adapted Italian comedy, it often featured the *mujer varonil*, a woman in men's clothes who takes on the aggressive role in the love-chase; farcical **transvestism** was not uncommon, as in Lope de Vega's (1562–1635) *El mesón de la corte* (The Inn of the Court, 1583?) and Monroy y Silva's *El caballero-dama* (The Lady Cavalier), in which two men in drag are tricked into bed together. Intense Platonic relationships between single-sex couples are often depicted, as in the anonymous *El crotalón* (ca. 1553), but in a society where sodomites were burned at the stake during the **Inquisition**, orthodox sexuality always prevailed by the play's ending.

The Elizabethan Stage. The Elizabethan gender-confusion drama was complicated by the fact that women were played by boy actors, a development from school drama. Thus, in William Shakespeare's *As You Like It* (1599/1600), there is the intricate enigma of a boy actor playing a girl disguising herself as a youth who acts as a woman to aid his/her wooer. The practice also required adjustments in performance convention: nowhere in *Antony and Cleopatra* (1607) do the passionate lovers kiss. This aspect of the stage fueled condemnation by Puritans and reformers, who damned it as a hotbed of sodomy; there is scant hard evidence of homosexual activity among players and playwrights, but the imputation is not without foundation. Clear cases can be made for Nicholas

Udall (1505–1556), headmaster of Eton and author of *Ralph Roister Doister* (between 1534 and 1541), who admitted to “buggery” with one of his students; and for Christopher Marlowe, whose own predilections found their way into his work: the grand amour of the king and his favorite Piers Gaveston in *Edward II* (1593), the court of Henri III in *The Massacre at Paris* (1593), and the scene between Ganymede and Jupiter in *Dido Queen of Carthage* (1594). Whatever the homosexual component of his sonnets, Shakespeare only occasionally portrayed the love of one man for another in his dramatic works: when he did it was as a consuming, unspoken passion that expressed itself in deeds: Antonio’s sacrifice for Bassanio in *The Merchant of Venice* (1594 or 1596); the sea-captain Antonio’s protection of Sebastian in *Twelfth Night* (1600); and Achilles’ avenging of Patroclus in *Troilus and Cressida* (1602/3).

Further Developments in England. Tudor Morality plays packed with Protestant propaganda had displayed allegorical characters named Sodomy to stand for corrupt, courtly, and Catholic manners (as in John Bale’s *Three Laws*, 1538). Throughout the Jacobean and Caroline periods, pederasty continued to be associated on stage with (usually Italian) luxury and high life, a character called Sodome appearing in Cosmo Manuche’s *The Loyal Lovers* as late as 1652. John Marston’s *The Turk* (1610) contains an outspoken scene between the erotic tourist Bordello and his page Pantofle. In William Davenant’s *Albovine* (1629), the Lombard hero has a minion, and in his *The Cruel Brother* (1630), the Duke of Siena cherishes a favorite who “in his love . . . / He holdeth thus in his Armes, in fearfull care / Not to bruse you with his deere embracements.”

After the Restoration of the Stuarts and the introduction of actresses on the English stage, the heterosexual ingredient became more realistic in comedy, more idealistic in tragedy, though without entirely ousting the competition.

Montague Summers typically overstates the case when he refers to “the prevalence of uranianism in the theatre” of the time; it must be noted that fops, although mocked for such Frenchified behavior as the exchange of kisses in George Etherege’s *The Man of Mode* (1676), long to bed down women exclusively. (Despite their names, for instance, Sir Gaylove and Sir Butterfly in Newburgh Hamilton’s *The Doating Lovers* [1715] are both inveterate womanizers.) Pederasty is associated not with effeminates, but with decadent foreign courts or decayed rakes who need a new stimulus: in Edward Howard’s *The Usurper* (1664), the comments of Damocles and Hugo de Petra concerning a page are openly pedophilic, and in Aphra Behn’s *The Amorous Prince* (1671), Lorenzo tries to seduce the boy Philibert who, however, turns out to be a girl in disguise. In Thomas Otway’s *The Souldier’s Fortune* (1681), an elderly fool is delighted to discover—or so he thinks—that a girl he is tumbling is a boy. The rhymed extravaganza *Sodom, or The Quintessence of Debauchery* (1684?), attributed to the Earl of Rochester, which partly hymns the superiority of buggery to “normal” practices, was never performed.

The matchmaker Coupler is the only blatant “queen” in Restoration drama; in John Vanbrugh’s *The Relapse* (1696) “old Sodom” as he is known requests the hero’s sexual favors as a reward for his complicity. He represents a new trend, for in the eighteenth century the flamboyant fop character, like the audience itself, underwent a process of *embourgeoisement*. The fop was shown as an overreaching member of the middle class, usually a simpering “molly,” more distinctly a denizen of a subculture than his predecessors. The molly’s first stage appearance may be the “nice fellow” Maiden “who values himself upon his Effeminacies,” in Thomas Baker’s comedy *Tunbridge-Walks; or, The Yeoman of Kent* (1703), believed by his contemporaries to be a portrait of the author’s former behavior. Other examples are Varnish and Bardach

in *Kensington Gardens* (1720) by the actor John Leigh; the much-imitated Fribble in David Garrick's *A Miss in Her Teens* (1747); "The Daffodils" in Garrick's *The Male-Coquette* (1757); and Jessamy in Isaac Bickerstaffe's *Lionel and Clarissa* (1768). A spate of pamphlets and articles about similar "soft gentlemen" suggest that these types did not exaggerate real life models by much. Within the theatrical community, a number of homosexual figures were conspicuous, among them Leigh (1689–1726) himself. Of the boy-actors who continued to play women into the Restoration period, Edward Kynaston (1643–1712) was accused by Dryden of being the Duke of Buckingham's catamite; and James Nokes (d. 1696), who played the title role in *The Maid of the Mill* (1660) and later kept a toyshop, was castigated in the *Satyr on the Players* as "This B[ugger] Nokes, whose unwieldy T[arse]/ Weeps to be buried in his Foreman's A[rse]." Later, the popular comedian Samuel Foote (1720–1777), who often played old women, was tried and acquitted for sodomy with his man-servant. In the Regency period, a post-mortem revealed the actress and prostitute Eliza Edwards (1814–1833) to have been a male transvestite.

French Theatre. When Mme. de Maintenon, themorganatic wife of Louis XIV, requested the archbishop of Paris to follow the example of Cromwell's parliament and order the closing of the French theatres, he resisted by pointing out that the stage, with its heterosexual concerns, prevented the spread of "unnatural vice." Under the French Regency (1715–23), a number of private pornographic theatres were maintained by the *noblesse*, but homosexual activities were rarely shown; an exception was the private theatre of the Duchesse de Villeroi, where lesbian comedies performed by Opera dancers ended in orgies. One of the erotic authors, Charles Colle (1709–1783), planned a *vaudeville* based on "those gentlemen," but gave it up allegedly because he could find no rhyme for *bougre*. In *La Comtesse d'Olonne*,

attributed to Bussy-Rabutin, Le Comte de Guice, described as a "gentilhomme de la manchette" is finally converted to heterosexuality; similarly, in *Les Plaisirs du cloître*, sapphic flagellation gives way to ordinary love-making. A later parody of these works, *Les Esprits des moeurs au XVIII^e siècle*, attributed to Charles de Nerciat, presents a graphic scene of lesbian lovemaking. The French acting profession harbored many deviants: the great tragedienne Françoise **Raucourt** presided over a lesbian secret society, the Anandrynes; the harlequin Carlo Bertinazzi (1713–1783), admired by Garrick for his eloquent back, had a liaison with the married actor Favart. The handsome young actor Fleury (Abraham-Joseph Bernard, 1750–1822), was said to be kept by the Venetian ambassador at an annual pension of eight thousand pounds; he had a declared admirer in Prince Henry of Prussia, Frederick the Great's homosexual brother.

Europe from the End of the Old Regime to World War I. From its inception, the most prominent figures in the German theatre were unabashed pederasts, starting with the classical actors August Wilhelm Iffland (1759–1814) and Wilhelm Kunst (Kunze, 1799–1859), both much valued by Goethe. Some of the greatest German dramatists are believed to have had similar propensities which nourished their works: Friedrich von Schiller (1759–1805) left behind an unfinished play, *Die Malteser* (The Knights of Malta, 1794–1803), whose Crequi and St. Priest exhibit homophilic feelings; August von Kotzebue's (1761–1819) tendency to lachrymose sentimentality rather than sensuality in his portrayal of love may be attributed to his nature. The tastes of Heinrich von Kleist and the Austrian Franz Grillparzer (1791–1872), on the other hand, are not demonstrated in their dramatic works. In Vogtland, a workers' neighborhood in northern Berlin, the Nationaltheater was known before it burned in 1883 as the playhouse of homosexuals, who included

its manager, the "last romantic" star Hermann Hendrichs (1809–1871), the tragediennes Clara Ziegler (1844–1909) and Felicita Vestvali (Anne Marie Stegemann, 1829–1880), both of whom played Romeo, and, among the patrons, Prince Georg of Prussia and J. B. Schweitzer, president of the All-German Workers' Union. Later, the Viktoriatheater rightfully inherited its reputation. Josef Kains (1858–1910), the great leading man of Wilhelmine classical theatre, was, at the age of 27, the final favorite of Ludwig II of Bavaria.

Simon Karlinsky has argued convincingly for the homosexuality of Russian playwrights Nikolai Vasilevich Gogol (1809–1852), whose fear of women perspires through his comedies, and Vladislav Aleksandrovich Ozerov (1770–1816), whose verse tragedy *Dmitrij Donskoj* (Dmitry of the Don) (1807) has as a subplot the fervent devotion of a page for his knight. Homophilic sentiment also motivates Balzac's melodrama *Vautrin* (1840), banned not for its content but for the political satire in its costuming.

Homosexuality, as it came to be defined and recognized in the nineteenth century, was not unveiled on stage until the *fin-de-siècle* cult of decadence made it modish. A leading star of the Parisian theatre of that period was the flamboyant Romanian Edouard de Max (1869–1925) who, according to Gide, nursed a lifelong desire to play Nero, Henri III, and Heliogabalus; a play about him was written by André Boussac de Saint-Marc: *Sardana-pale* (1926).

Oscar Wilde's aphoristic comedies can be seen as manifestations of a camp sensibility, and some critics have speculated that the Bunburying of the heroes of *The Importance of Being Earnest* (1895) stands for *sub rosa* excursions into the gay demi-monde. Lytton Strachey interpreted the main character of *A Woman of No Importance* (1893) as "a wicked Lord, staying in a country house, who has made up his mind to bugger one of the other guests—a handsome young man

of twenty." Wilde's *Salome* (1893, prod. 1896) had an influence on the usually reticent André Gide; *Saul* (1903, prod. 1922), set in the Biblical time of David and Jonathan, was his only theatrical paean to an older man's passion for a younger.

Scandinavia's most illustrious homosexual author, the Danish novelist Herman Bang (1857–1912), though deeply involved in the theatre, was not an outstanding dramatist. He founded the first Norwegian artistic cabaret (in Christiania, now Oslo, 1892), worked in Paris at the experimental Théâtre de l'Oeuvre in 1894 as "scenic instructor," and was director at the Folketheater, Copenhagen, 1898–1901. Despite his insignificance as a playwright, his intimacy with drama deeply influenced the prose style of his outsider novels. The Swede August Strindberg (1849–1912) at the outset of his illustrious career was led by his complex misogyny to introduce evil lesbians as psychic vampire figures into his writings. In *Comrades* (1888), a mannish female artist seduces the hero's wife into a bohemian career; the heroine of *Miss Julie* (1889) is doomed because her mother raised her as a boy and thus undermined her feminine intuition for survival; and the two-woman one-act *The Stronger* (1889) reflected the author's own insecurities about his wife's women-friends. Strindberg's later historical dramas about Queen Christina (1901) and Gustav III (1902) touch glancingly on their protagonists' sexual nature, the Queen shown to be repelled by the idea of marriage (a common enough distaste in Strindberg). The modern Swedish play *Night of the Tribades* (1975) by Per Olof Enquist (b. 1934) caused a sensation by exploring Strindberg's tortured awareness that his first wife was having an affair with another woman.

A lyrical treatment of the male eros was proffered by the Russian poet Mikhail Afanasievich Kuzmin; several of his plays, including *A Dangerous Precaution* (1907) and *The Venetian Madcaps* (1912), vaunt the love of two men over

that of a man and a woman. The first professed contemporary gay protagonist in drama is the title character of Armory-Dauriac's comedy *Le Monsieur aux chrysanthèmes* (1908; the title parodies *La Dame aux camélias*), which satirized the popularity of elegant homosexuals in society. Deviant characters crop up occasionally in modernist Italian and Spanish drama—Lorenzaccio in Sem Benelli's *La Maschera di Bruto* (The Mask of Brutus, 1908) and the King in Antonio Buero-Vallejo's *Isabela, reina de corazones* (Isabel, Queen of Hearts). Sholom Asch's Yiddish melodrama *Gott fun Nekoma* (God of Vengeance, prod. 1907), with its saving love between a lesbian prostitute and a brothel-keeper's innocent daughter, created no great frisson when produced in Europe, but raised a howl of execration in New York in 1922.

Germany was perhaps the first European nation to treat homosexuality frankly, though as a psychic catastrophe, on the modern stage. Usually historic subject matter justified its introduction, in plays about Hadrian (Frederiksen, Paul Heyse), Saul (Wolfskehl), and Frederick the Great (Burchard), or else the play was based on ancient myth (Elisär von Kupffer's *Narkissos*) or on stage convention (Karl von Levetzow's pantomime *Die beiden Pierrots* [The Two Pierrots]). As a "problem" of modern society, homosexuality appears disguised as the decadent clown Edi in Hermann Bahr's *Die Mutter* (The Mother, 1891) and undisguised as the tormented youth Rudolf in Ludwig Dilsner's *Jasminblüthen* (Jasmine Blossoms, 1899), who is one of the first of many to find his way out of the dilemma by shooting himself. As early as 1902, the critic Hanns Fuchs was complaining that the denouements of such plays depended too much on the state of the laws: "the ideal homosexual drama, depicting the conflicts in an individual soul and their influence on its action and conception of life of homosexuals, is still to be written." He suggested a dreamer like Grillparzer

or a strong-man like Michelangelo as models.

Fuchs' wish went unanswered. Herbert Hirschberg's *Fehler* (Faults, 1906) also belonged to the school of problem drama. In his "tragedy of sex" *Frühlingserwachen* (Spring's Awakening, 1891, prod. 1906), Frank Wedekind (1864–1918) included a vignette of teenage homoeroticism amid his spectrum of pubescent anxieties, but again the play's catastrophe was the result of social attitudes. He came closer to offering an inner conflict with the Countess Geschwitz, a full-length portrait of an obsessed tribade in *Erdegeist* (Earth Spirit, 1898, prod. 1902) and *Die Büchse der Pandoras* (Pandora's Box, 1904, prod. 1906).

After World War I. The liberation from Victorian values felt after World War I was reflected in the theatre as well. Expressionist drama often used adolescent homosexuality as a metaphor for youthful rebellion, morbidity, and confusion, as in Arnolt Bronnen's *Vatermord* (Parricide, 1922), Klaus Mann's *Anja und Esther* (1925), and Ferdinand Bruckner's *Krankheit der Jugend* (The Disease of Youth, 1926). Bruckner's *Die Verbrecher* (Criminals, 1928) included an attack on the infamous Paragraph 175 of the penal code. Bertolt Brecht's early plays, *Baal* (1922), *Im Dickicht der Städte* (In the Jungle of Cities, 1924), *Edward II* (1924), and even *Die Dreigroschen Oper* (The Threepenny Opera, 1928), are filled with erotic male-bonding, partly derived from Rimbaud. An amateur group, the Theater des Eros, existed between 1921 and 1924 to perform outspoken homosexual liberation dramas in private homes.

Christa Winsloe's *Gestern und Heute* (Mädchen in Uniform, 1930), filmed and widely revived outside Germany, presented a girls'-school crush in a tragic light, but put the blame squarely on old-fashioned values. Throughout the 1920s, in fact, tragedy was the standard dramatic mode for lesbianism. In France, Edouard Bourdet (1887–1945) treated up-

per-class gay males comically in *La Fleur de pois* (The Upper Crust, 1932), but imbued lesbian attraction with dire consequences in *La Prisonnière* (The Captive, 1926). (Its plot had a forerunner in Catulle Mendès' *Protectrices*, a pale epigone in Roger Martin du Gard's *Taciturne*, 1931, and a German counterpart in Hermann Sudermann's *Die Freundin*, 1913/14.)

Federico García Lorca may have channeled his own predilections into the repressed sexuality of his major tragedies, for he puts his praise of masculine beauty in the mouths of his trammelled heroines. More explicit are his early poetic drama *Diálogo del Amargo* (The Bitter One's Dialogue), in which a young man with a death wish is seduced by the horseman Muerte who offers him his highly symbolic knives; and the suppressed surrealist play *El público* (The Audience, 1930; not published until 1976).

This convention that passion was tragic, but behavioral characteristics comic, was maintained in the United States. The very first American drama of homophilic despair, Henry Blake Fuller's "closet" (in both senses) one-act *At Saint Judas's* (1896), ends with the suicide of the best man reviled by the beloved (straight) bridegroom. Mae West's *The Drag* (1927), which devoted a whole act to a transvestite ball, and *Pleasure Man* (1928), which filled the stage with hilarious dishing queens, both had tragic endings tacked on. These plays were prosecuted and banned, whereas Lillian Hellman's ambivalent melodrama of calumny and suppressed desire, *The Children's Hour* (1934), won critical acclaim. The leading dramatic actresses of the New York stage, Eva Le Gallienne (b. 1889), Katharine Cornell (1893–1974), and Lynn Fontanne (1887–1983), were known privately for the intimacy of their female friendships; the last two married gay men, Guthrie McClintic (1893–1961) and Alfred Lunt (1893–1977), respectively.

Broadway was somewhat hamstrung by police censorship, which was

less consistent in its bans than was the Lord Chamberlain's Office in London; still, British drama managed to sneak in the occasional reference. Precious chamber plays like Ronald Firbank's *The Princess Zoubaroff* (1920) circulated only among the cognoscenti; but in 1925, Arnold Bennett could find the opening scene of Frederick Lonsdale's *Spring Cleaning*, a gathering of homosexuals at a cocktail party, the only genuine thing in the play. That same year, a sentimental attachment formed in a prison-camp was made central to J. R. Ackerley's *The Prisoners of War*; and token homosexuals also made an appearance in Ronald Mackenzie's *Musical Chairs* (1931). *The Green Bay Tree* (1933) by Mordaunt Shairp (1887–1939), a melodrama about an epicene older man's hold on a languid youth, made a success, repeated, with some changes, on Broadway. Schoolboy crushes, familiar to much of the audience, surfaced in *The Hidden Years* (1948) by Travers Otway and *Quaint Honour* (1949) by Roger Gellert in more or less covert form. It is typical that England's two favorite authors of comedies and musicals, Noel Coward (1899–1973) and Ivor Novello (Daniel Davies, 1893–1951), whose sexual orientation was common knowledge in theatrical circles, remained closeted to the general public; the campiness of their works was put down to "sophistication." The same held true for such important playwrights and actors as Somerset Maugham, Terence Rattigan (1911–1977), Michael Redgrave (1908–1985), Charles Laughton (1899–1962), Emlyn Williams (1905–1987), Esme Percy (1887–1957), Ernest Milton (1890–1974), Gwen Ffrangcon-Davies (b. 1896), and John Gielgud (b. 1904) (even after Gielgud had been arrested for public indecency), as well as for the powerful producer Hugh "Binkie" Beaumont (1908–1973) and the influential critic James Agate (1877–1942). At the end of his career, Coward, who had put a chorus of "pretty boys, witty boys" wearing green carnations into *Bitter Sweet* (1929) and hinted at a bisexual triangle in *Design*

for *Living* (1933), ventured a bit more frankness in *A Song at Twilight* (1966), ostensibly based on Maugham and Max Beerbohm; Rattigan also made the exploitation of a pederast central to his late play *Man and Boy* (1963). William Douglas Home (b. 1912) is a mainstream playwright who has been willing to deal with the taboo subject throughout his career, from his prison play *Now Barrabbas* (1947), to his comedy about a transsexual, *Aunt Edwina* (1960), to his drama *David and Jonathan* (1984).

When the Nazis came to power in Germany, the leading man Adolf Wohlbruck (1900–1966) had to flee to England, where he became known as Anton Walbrook; so did Conrad Veidt, who eventually wound up in Hollywood. Less lucky colleagues perished in the camps. The immensely popular Gustav Gründgens (1899–1963) was forced to marry and suppress his propensities to retain the favor of his masters; after the war, he persisted as the leading director and classical actor in West Germany, but his survival tactics were attacked by his former friend Klaus Mann in the novel *Mephisto*.

After World War II. During the post-war period, the French theatre was dominated by Jean Cocteau's circle, including the stage designer Christian Bérard (1902–1949) and the actor Jean Marais (b. 1913); the bisexual Gérard Philippe (1922–1959) was everyone's favorite leading man. The foremost members of the Comédie Française, such as Jean Weber and Jacques Charon (1920–1975), were familiar faces at gay salons. Julien Green's monumental *Sud* (South, 1953) clothed his doomed love story in Civil War garb and veiled suggestion; the agony of unrequited affection went even deeper in Henry de Montherlant's *La Ville dont le Prince est un Enfant* (The City Whose Prince Is a Child, 1951), set in a Catholic school where an obsessive priest roots out the special friendships of the students. Typically, the secretive and suicidal Montherlant con-

sidered it unsuitable for public performance by boys.

New Openness in the Sixties. The drag-ball scene in John Osborne's play about the Austrian spy Alfred Redl, *A Patriot for Me* (1965), proved one of the nails in the coffin of official British censorship, whose demands for cuts showed up its absurdity. Joe Orton was another strain for it, for, like Wilde, his sense of paradox and sly verbal innuendo informed all his work, making it not so easy to cut offending passages: *Entertaining Mr. Sloane* (1964), with its bisexual protagonist, the amoral male couple in *Loot* (1966), and the polymorphous perversity of the entire cast of *What the Butler Saw* (1969) could not be neutralized by excision. His camp sensibility led him to include arcane references within standard farce set-ups, couched in impeccably elegant utterance; and his successes emboldened him, in rewriting his radio play *The Ruffian on the Stair* for the stage in 1967, to strengthen the sexual bond between the two male characters.

Three plays of the 1966/67 season continued the tradition of homosexual as lonely outsider: Frank Marcus' (b. 1928) cruel lesbian comedy *The Killing of Sister George*, Charles Dyer's (b. 1928) bleak duet *Staircase*, and Christopher Hampton's (b. 1946) examination of adolescent alienation, *When Did You Last See My Mother?* Hampton's next play, *Total Eclipse* (1968), was a skillful exploration of the Rimbaud/Verlaine relationship. At least one homosexual was to be found as local color in performances by Joan Littlewood's group (*A Taste of Honey* by Shelagh Delaney and *The Hostage* by Brendan Behan, both 1958). The plays of Peter Shaffer (b. 1926), beginning with *Five Finger Exercise* (1958), generally concern the uneasy relationship between an older man and a younger; and Simon Gray (b. 1936) played with pathetic same-sex desires in *Wise Child* (1967) and *Spoiled* (1968) before presenting a witty bisexual protagonist (but one who is abandoned at the end) in *Butley* (1971). Alan Bennett's (b. 1934)

plays have been both more open and more fun.

In the United States, *Tea and Sympathy* (1953) by Robert Anderson (b. 1917) encapsulates a prevalent American attitude: the sensitive hero could be cured of his reputation as a sissy by the love of a good woman. The stage image of the homosexual as outrageous fairy or doomed psychotic was challenged by Ruth and Augustus Goetz' adaptation of Gide's *The Immoralist* (1954); imperfect in its reasoning, it nevertheless presented a man with homophobic tendencies as intelligent and sympathetic. It was, however, less significant than the prominence of Tennessee Williams in the American theatre. In Williams' early drama, explicit homosexuality remained marginal; the flashback into Blanche's marriage in *Streetcar Named Desire* (1947), the Baron de Charlus episode in *Camino Real* (1953), and the lesbian undercurrent in *Something Unspoken* (1958). It became more crucial as the hidden motivation in *Cat on a Hot Tin Roof* (1955) and the central secret in *Suddenly Last Summer* (1958), but in a standard mode: the protagonists are both victims, of desires suppressed and expressed, respectively. In later plays like *Small Craft Warnings* (1972) with its transvestite husband, and *Vieux Carré* (1977), the types are grotesque but the motives are somewhat less disguised.

Such themes remained covert in William Inge (*The Boy in the Basement*, 1962, *Natural Affection*, 1963) and Edward Albee (although *The Zoo Story*, 1959, is cryptic only to those who cannot spot one of its two characters). This did not stop hostile critics from declaring that *Who's Afraid of Virginia Woolf?* (1962) was really about two gay male couples. Albee's savage hostility to the nuclear family struck them as symptomatic of a perverted imagination; they were outraged by the musky and enigmatic eroticism of *Tiny Alice* (which one claimed was gay slang for the rectum). Albee's choice of fiction to dramatize—Carson McCullers'

Ballad of the Sad Café (1963) and James Purdy's *Malcolm* (1966)—also seemed intent on glorifying the freakish outsider. As homosexual characters proliferated on the Broadway stage, this critical hostility grew until, in the mid- and late 1960s, such widely read pundits as Stanley Kauffmann, Walter Kerr, and Robert Brustein were positing a homosexual conspiracy in the American theatre, which "often poisons what you see and hear." They argued that homosexual playwrights camouflaged their concerns in the guise of heterosexual relationships; also implicit was the fear that show business was in the hands of perverts, from costumers and choreographers to producers. A decade later this paranoia was echoed in Canada, where the actor John Colicos complained "the faggots have taken over."

Canada was the breeding-ground for John Herbert's (b. 1926) harsh play of prison life, *Fortune and Men's Eyes* (1967), which pivots on the sexual politics of the cell-block; and the Quebec playwright Michel Tremblay (b. 1942), with his drag-queen soap operas *La duchesse de Langeais* (1969) and *Hosanna* (1973). Tremblay, a master of local patois, was also influenced by the French thief-turned-prose-stylist Jean Genet, whose dramas, although they explore the mysteries of personality, are less explicitly homoerotic than his novels. His first play, *Les Bonnes* (The Maids, 1947), did not get the all-male cast Genet desired in its premiere production, but since then the two sister-maids and their mistress have frequently been played by men. Similarly, Herbert's play may owe something to Genet's *Haute Surveillance* (Death Watch, 1949), a more oblique and lyrical treatment of sexual subservience in confinement.

The American critics' demand for homosexual honesty in packaging was answered by Mart Crowley's (b. 1935) *The Boys in the Band* (1968); drenched in self-pity, predictable in its stereotypes, carrying on the tradition of the deviant as victim of his own deviance, it nevertheless

presented a half-world independent of heterosexual concerns. Its commercial success, which opened the flood-gates to similar confessional dramas, was due in part to its confirming the general public in the view that such a life was emotionally barren. Although *Boys in the Band* did include a campy sissy in its roster, at least it eschewed the drag queen who remained a constant in drama of this period (Lanford Wilson's *Madness of Lady Bright*, 1964; Frederick Combs' *The Children's Mass*, 1973). A rash of commercial farces erupted, using the homosexual as a trendy type in the hackneyed comic situations; in the West End, *Spitting Image* (1966) by Colin Spencer (b. 1933) presented a gay couple about to have a baby; in New York, *Norman, Is That You?* (1972) by Ron Clark (b. 1933) and Sam Bobrick (b. 1932) and *Steambath* (1971) by Bruce Jay Friedman (b. 1930) exploited coming-out and cruising areas for their crude cartoons. (The British critic Kenneth Tynan noted that Broadway humor derived exclusively from Jews and homosexuals.)

The "Liberated" Seventies. In Paris, the phenomenally successful *La Cage aux Folles* (Cage of Queens, 1972) by Jean Poirier ran for four years, its popularity also due to its reinforcing misconceptions with broad caricatures of glamor drag queens, ghettoized in a showbiz setting. (When the actor Michel Serrault was asked how he dared go on in net stockings and ostrich-boa at his age, he explained that he put a spot of red on his nose, and so was not playing a homosexual but a clown in drag.)

Gay dramatists attempted to infuse the boulevard farce with insider knowledge, as in A. J. Kronengold's *Tub Strip* (1973), James Kirkwood's (1930-1989) *P.S. Your Cat Is Dead* (1975), and Terrence McNally's (b. 1939) *The Ritz* (1975). But the drag queen remained the favored protagonist, cropping up again in *Torch Song Trilogy* (1983), three plays by Harvey Fierstein which were evolved in a gay theatre and then transferred successfully to Broadway to win a Tony Award. Significantly,

Fierstein's only popular success since was his libretto for Jerry Herman's (b. 1933) musical comedy version of *La Cage aux Folles* (1983), which coarsened an already simplistic sitcom to suit the tired businessman.

Heterosexual playwrights like David Rabe and David Mamet seemed unable to get beyond the notion that same-sex affection spelled doom, a collapse of personality. Meanwhile, homosexual dramatists were moving beyond such clichés. It is noteworthy that Robert Patrick and Lanford Wilson (both b. 1937) first gained recognition on the New York stage in 1964 with oppressed characters: the obsessed older man in Patrick's *The Haunted Host* and the suicidal drag queen in Wilson's *The Madness of Lady Bright*. After treating other themes for more than a decade, they then took a less hysterical approach to the subject: Patrick in *Kennedy's Children* (1973) offered a homosexual as a type of his times, and by 1983 was writing specifically for gay audiences in such plays as *Blue Is for Boys*. Wilson matured to present homosexual relationships and characters as natural features of the American landscape in *The Fifth of July* (1978) and *Burn This* (1987). Similarly, Albert Innaurato (b. 1948) could balance his obese and pathetic freak in *The Transfiguration of Benno Blimpie* (1977) with a humorous, boy-next-door seduction in *Gemini* (1977).

It was the "worthiness" and remoteness of the subject and the familiarity of its treatment which dictated how the general public would react to plays about gay life. *Bent* (1978) by Martin Sherman, an overwrought picture of persecution in Nazi Germany, couched in the prose of Masterpiece Theatre, was acclaimed; *Forty-Deuce* (1981) by Alan Bowne, a much more authentic and original piece of work concerning the teenaged hustlers and their johns who hang out around Times Square, was reviled. Black American playwrights tended to define homosexuality as a decadent white threat

to their virility. The work of Imamu Amiri Baraka (LeRoi Jones, b. 1934) grew more homophobic as his political radicalism increased: *The Toilet* (1964), a self-styled "play about love," seems to sanction the embrace of the white "queer" and the black youth, yet Baraka's public statements have attacked homosexuals violently. James Baldwin (1924–1987), excoriated by the radical black community for "collaboration," never ventured on a theatrical equivalent of *Giovanni's Room*. Ed Bullins (b. 1935), who portrayed a stereotypical "bull dyke" in *Clara's Ole Man* (1965), boasted that his directors were not "twisted and trying to find the latest fad that the faggots are trying to make a new *Hair* out of."

The reference was to the "hippie" musical *Hair* (1967), which, with the pseudo-sophisticated revue *Oh! Calcutta!* (1969), presented unorthodox sexual practices as natural variants; but the notion of homosexual as villain persisted even in a counter-culture phenomenon like the rock musical *Jesus Christ Superstar* (by Andrew Lloyd Webber, 1971): the disciple who loves Christ most ardently turned out to be Judas, and Herod is played as a sequined screamer. Exclusively gay musicals could not redress the balance: Al Carmines' (b. 1936) *The Faggot* (1973), meant as a populist and ecumenical plea for love, was scorned by activists for stereotyping, and the novelties *Boy Meets Boy* (by Bill Solly and Donald Ward, 1975) and *Lovers* (1975) enjoyed no particular shelf-life. However, *The Rocky Horror Show* (1973) by Richard O'Brien, especially in its cult film avatar, revealed how familiar *psychopathia sexualis* had become to a youthful mass public.

More vital was the explosion of "low camp" transvestitic theatre that emerged from New York's underground, in tandem with Andy Warhol's Factory. Characteristically, the earliest of these playwrights were Warhol hangers-on: the transvestite actor Jackie Curtis (b. 1947) with *Glamour, Glory and Gold: The Life*

of Nola Noonan, Goddess and Star (1967), and the scenarist Ronald Tavel (b. 1941) with the jungle extravaganza *Gorilla Queen* (1966). An important hothouse was John Vaccaro's Theater of the Ridiculous, which forged one major talent in the person of Charles Ludlam (1940–1987). The basic technique of the Ridiculous style was pastiche, trashing Western civilization by mingling high culture and popular totems, and lacing it all with genital humor and gender switches. Ludlam's plays, beginning with *When Queens Collide* (1967), and culminating in his own Ridiculous Theatrical Company (*Bluebeard*, 1970; *The Grand Tarot*, 1971; *Camille*, 1973; *Stage Blood*, 1974, etc.) were virtual palimpsests, shrewdly inlaying classical allusions and quotations into pop art. A consummate comedian, best known for his portrayals of Marguerite Gautier and Galas (a monster diva based on Callas), Ludlam was surrounded by lesser talents whose ineptitude made its own comment on the aspirations of the professional theatre. His influence is strong on such an epigone as Charles Busch (b. 1955), whose *Vampire Lesbians of Sodom* (1985) and *Psycho Beach Party* (1987) are less cultured, less threatening, and therefore more accessible than Ludlam's work.

In the wake of the political events of 1968, feminist and gay liberation politics gave rise to a number of agitprop groups, and by the mid-1970s, theatre collectives and "coming-out" plays burgeoned. In London, Gay Sweatshop, organized by Ed Berman in 1975, staged lunchtime bills of short plays dealing with identity, censorship, and relationships; the actors were professionals, many of whom, such as Simon Callow and Anthony Sher (both b. 1949), were to become highly articulate luminaries of the establishment stage. In 1977, the Sweatshop divided into men's and women's groups, the latter tending to revue-like formats. In Holland, the Rooie Flikkers (or The Softies) became prominent.

New York counterparts like TOSOS (The Other Side of the Stage, New York, 1972-77) and the Stonewall Theater were both more polemical and less professional in their achievements; they developed their own playwrights, such as Doric Wilson (b. 1939), William M. Hoffman (b. 1939), Philip Blackwell and Arch Brown, who preached to the converted, but provided a sense of cultural solidarity. Jonathan Katz' docudrama *Coming Out!* (1975) supplied a useful history lesson for the newly aware. The Glines Theater (founded 1976) nurtured talents like Fierstein, whose early work, such as *Flatbush Tosca* (1975), made comment through reductive comedy; and the gifted Jane Chambers (1937-1983), whose *Last Summer at Bluefish Cove* (1980) has become a staple in lesbian theatre. The proliferation of similar groups in other cities led to the creation of a Gay Theater Alliance in 1978 to provide a network. Gender-fuck troupes like The Cockettes and the Angels of Light in San Francisco and Centola and the Hot Peaches, another Warhol-sponsored enterprise, in New York, combined shock tactics, high camp, glitter rock, and reverse glamor to achieve their effects. They have been succeeded by less strident, more recondite performance artists like Tim Miller and Holly Hughes.

Lesbian Troupes. A score of lesbian ensembles quickly sprang up in the wake of feminist theatre groups, among them the Lavender Cellar in Minneapolis (founded 1973), the Red Dyke Theater in Atlanta (founded 1974), and the Lesbian-Feminist Theater Collective of Pittsburgh (founded 1977). Although they produced plays by Chambers, Pat Surcicle (*Prisons*, 1973), and the poetic imagist Joan Schenkar, their repertoires, as in England, emphasized satiric revue. This was especially the case at the WOW Cafe in New York's East Village, founded by Lois Weaver and Peggy Shaw in 1982; Alice Forrester's subversive parody *Heart of the Scorpion* and Holly Hughes' self-regarding satire *The Well of Horniness* (both 1985) were typical offerings.

Developments in World Theatre. Australia, perhaps because of its willfully macho image, tended to dramatize homosexual life in transvestite terms, equating the gay male with the drag queen. The best-known examples are Peter Kenna's (b. 1930) *Mates* (1975), whose catalytic character is yet another depressed and depressive nightclub performer; and Steve J. Spears' (b. 1951) *The Elocution of Benjamin Franklin* (1976), a one-character tragi-comedy of a middle-aged cross-dresser who gets too close to a student and ends up all but lobotomized. A Gay Theater Company was formed in Sydney in 1979 to present a more balanced picture of the varieties of homosexual experience.

Outside the English-speaking world, homosexuality has not played a pre-eminent part in mainstream drama. Even Mishima (1925-1970) did not choose to treat it, although his own sado-masochistic penchants surface in his Kabuki play *The Drawn-Bow Moon* (1969), in which a naked samurai is tortured on stage. In Germany, Martin Sperr's (b. 1941) *Jagdszenen aus Niederbayern* (Hunting Scenes from Lower Bavaria, 1966), showing a young mechanic destroyed by his narrow-minded provincial community, created a stir and was filmed. The German-language theatre, on the whole, seemed to equate homosexuality with violence. The Austrian dramatist Wolfgang Bauer (b. 1941) in *Magic Afternoon* (1968) had two layabouts indulge in kissing to torment a young woman, and in *Change* (1969) a gay art-dealer has his face shoved in broken glass. In Bodo Strauss' *Der Park* (The Park, 1985), Cyprian, the type of the creative artist, is brutally murdered by the black park-attendant he fancies. Rainer Fassbinder used his films more than his plays to express his concepts of social and interpersonal exploitation.

Although Parisian audiences flocked to a boulevard farce like *La Cage aux Folles*, a more select public has appreciated the absurdist plays of Argentinian-born Copi: he has played in his own works,

such as *Le homosexuel ou La difficulté de s'exprimer* (The Homosexual or The Difficulty of Self-Expression, 1971) and *Le Frigo* (The Fridge, 1983). The Soviet theatre, reflecting its society, has diligently avoided the subject; productions of Williams' *Streetcar* and Ronald Harwood's *The Dresser*, for instance, cut all allusions to homosexuality. In Italy, on the other hand, the fashionable theatre and opera have been dominated by elegant director-designers like Luchino Visconti and his disciple Franco Zeffirelli (b. 1923). They were responsible for introducing Williams and Albee to Italy, but their flamboyant wielding of high style was often vitiated by a penchant for garish melodrama and maudlin sentimentality.

The AIDS crisis has spawned a number of nonce dramas, modern versions of the problem play, where the message is more important than the medium: Larry Kramer's *The Normal Heart*, William M. Hoffman's *As Is*, Rebecca Ranson's *Warren*, Robert Chesley's *Night Sweat*, and the Theater Rhinoceros' dramatic collage *The AIDS Show* (all 1985). They affected the audiences that sought them out, but when they entered the repertory of regional theatres, subscribers often stayed away, refusing to confront the problem of "others." AIDS also had an impact on the theatre by decimating its ranks, its victims including Ludlam and the director-choreographer Michael Bennett (1943-1987), along with dozens of rank-and-file members of the profession. The glaring gaps left in the performing arts by these deaths reveal how dependent they have been on homosexual talent.

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Laurence Senelick

THEBES

Site of the Mycenaean citadel of Cadmus (legendary personification of the Semitic peoples of the East), Thebes was the capital of Boeotia in central Greece in classical times.

The Theban cycle, celebrated by Sophocles and other writers, offers several salient erotic themes. Cadmus' descendent Laius, warned by an oracle that his son would slay him, forewent sex with his wife Jocasta. Unaware of the danger and frustrated, she got him drunk, had intercourse with him, and in nine months produced the infant Oedipus, whom he ordered to be exposed. Laius was then exiled to the Peloponesus. Exclaiming "nature compels me," he then raped Chrysis, his host's 12-year old son, causing a curse to follow him to his Thebes when he returned. Oedipus, saved by a shepherd, grew to manhood, slew his father whom he did not recognize in distant parts, and came to Thebes. Here he ended the plague, married the widowed Jocasta, and sired children by her to begin a new round of tragedies including the execution of his daughter Antigone by her uncle Cleon for burying her rebel brother.

After Crete and Sparta, from which institutionalized pederasty was imported about 600 B.C., Thebes became the place Greeks most often named as the locus for the formalized of pederasty. In Plato's *Laws*, the Athenian declares that in Elis and Boeotia (including Thebes) they practiced pederasty uninhibitedly, each adult male living together with the boy he loved. The greatest pederastic poet, Pindar, resided in Thebes. When Alexander the Great destroyed the rebel city, he left Pindar's house standing to demonstrate his love of culture. After Sparta and Athens exhausted each other in the great Peloponnesian War, Pelopidas and Epaminondas, in exile in Athens, formed an aristocratic conspiracy to liberate their city.

Bravely surprising the Spartan garrison, they organized the Sacred Band