

bly as a result of this development that in the last years of his life he decided to seek protection in the church, becoming a priest.

Nonetheless, as late as 1564, in pronouncing the oration at the funeral of Michelangelo, the impenitent writer could not bring himself to omit (however brief and prudent the mention) of the bonds that linked the great sculptor to Gherardo Perini and Tommaso de' Cavalieri.

One year later Varchi followed Michelangelo. His death ended a cycle of homosexual intellectuals that had started with Marsilio Ficino and closed with the imposition of the new rigid climate of the Counterreformation.

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Giovanni Dall'Orto

VARIANT

This term, used both as adjective and as noun, enjoyed a limited currency in the 1940s and 1950s as a synonym of **homophile**. It probably owed its origin to the wish to avoid the unfortunate connotations which such terms as **pervert** and **deviate** had acquired by contamination from the older moralizing vocabulary, so that the latter designations were completely unacceptable to the gay community and its sympathizers. Two works that featured the word in their titles were George William Henry's *Sex Variants* (New York, 1941), a collection of risqué sexual biographies of homosexual men and women assembled by his collaborator Alfred A. Gross, and Jeannette Foster's classic study *Sex Variant Women in Literature* (New York, 1956).

While the term could have been applied to the whole range of departures from conventional sex expression, in prac-

tice it was limited to the homosexual, the underlying notion being that homosexuality is a part of the spectrum of normal sexual activity, not some willful or depraved aberration. Hence the usage was an effort to locate homosexual expression in the domain of the biological rather than of the pathological—to guard against the "medicalization" of the subject. In her **bibliographies** Barbara Grier drew a distinction between overt lesbianism and "variant" behavior in which the homosexual expression is latent or even denied. Perhaps because of its blandness and ambiguity, the term largely faded from the literature of the 1960s and later as a positive "gay consciousness" emerged.

Warren Johansson

VARIETY, REVUE, AND CABARET ENTERTAINMENT

Forthright presentation of homosexuality in popular entertainment was not uncommon so long as the deviant was depicted as an outrageous freak: a mincing effeminate in the case of men, a tough bull-dyke in the case of women.

Earlier History. At the beginning of the twentieth century French topical revues teemed with such caricatures; one presented a tableau of an ephebe crowning Count Adelswärd Fersen with roses. In *La Revue de Cluny* and *Je veux du nu, na!* (both 1908), Prussian officers were boldly lampooned as "queers" in the wake of the Eulenburg scandal. In the 1920s, the American vaudevillian Elsie Janis was startled to find that the Parisian revue in which she starred contained a lesbian sketch and a tableau of Henri III tatting with his minions. After World War I, the comedian O'dett brought homosexual gags into the French music hall and the clown Rhum played a "fairy" in his circus routine *La Cabine miraculeuse*. But a sharp dividing line between life and art had always been maintained. At the Chat Noir cabaret, Maurice Donnay's shadowplay