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Walter H. Breen (J. Z. Eglinton)
(1928-1993)

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Recent scholarship has emphasized homosexualities rather than simply the term *homosexual*. It is startling to note that, although coming from a very specific point of view, one of the pioneering studies by an American, *Greek Love*, anticipated this by at least thirty years. Walter Henry Breen (also known under his pseudonym J. Z. Eglinton) was the most important theorist of man-boy love to appear since the German figures (Benedict Friedlaender, Hans Blüher, the *Der Eigene* circle, Gustav Wyneken, and John Henry Mackay) in the first third of the twentieth century. Although retrograde (at least as compared with Mackay) in explicitly looking back to a Greek model,

Breen independently affirmed, as they had, the distinction between what he termed "Greek love" (pederasty, or intergenerational homosexual relationships) and "androphile homosexuality" (eroticism between adult males). Although he himself argued that androphile homosexuality had usurped the "true" tradition of homosexuality which belonged to Greek love, viewed in a critical perspective this renewed insight opened the way in the United States for an understanding of homosexual behavior as a protean rather than a unitary phenomenon. In addition, he applied critical and historical research skills he had honed in his other areas of expertise to the exploration of the whole span of nearly 3,000 years of the recorded history of homosexuality. In an era—the 1950s and 1960s—when most writers favorable to homosexual behavior were either celebratory (Garde/Leoni) or wrote from a descriptive, sociological perspective (Stearn, Cory/Sagarin), Breen made a notable academic contribution to uncovering the history of homosexuality,

and in the short-lived scholarly journal he conducted, encouraged others to do so too.

It has been over twenty years since I last saw Walter Breen. Although I vividly remember his general appearance—gray mane of hair and Whitmanesque beard flowing down over a gaudily flowered shirt unbuttoned to reveal a vast, hairy breast—I have difficulty fixing his height. Sober reflection indicates he was probably no taller than I, about six foot, but I am inclined to picture him as half a head taller. He literally left a larger-than-life impression.

This impression was the result of a remarkable force of personality that made Breen the center of attention in any gathering—be it a coin fair, a science fiction convention, or a movement meeting—of his prodigious intellectual energy, and, it must be admitted, of a carefully cultivated flair for the outrageous. For instance, although one of America's leading numismatic authorities, his best known pronouncement on the subject was, "I don't collect coins myself. That's only for rich people."

On the other hand, he had a good deal in the way of talents to cultivate, and a totally fallow field to work. Literally without precedents, he had been a foundling child, discovered in San Antonio, Texas, in 1928 (he used September 5 as his birth date). Developing a forceful personality and a drive for intellectual distinction may have been a coping strategy for claiming attention in the institutional and foster settings in which he grew up. Certainly his interest in reincarnation and his exploration of his "past lives" in Atlantis, Greece, Arthurian and Elizabethan England, and other eras might be seen as an effort to compensate for his lack of roots in this life; in effect, he created an identity for himself on *both* sides of his birth. He also found the etiology for his sexuality in his past lives; if it was classically Greek, that was because he had once sat literally at Socrates' feet.

He obtained his BA from Johns Hopkins in 1952, completing the four-year curriculum in just ten months, and qualifying for membership in Phi Beta Kappa. He also later completed the premedical course at Columbia and went on to complete a master's degree at University of California, Berkeley, in 1966, producing a thesis on "The Changing Social Status of the Musician." He was an accomplished pianist and an acknowledged expert on medieval and baroque music.

Even before his graduation, however, he was moving into the field where he would gain his greatest distinction. His earliest scholarly articles on the history of American coinage appeared in the *Numismatist* in 1951. His first book on numismatics, *Proof Coins Struck by the United States Mint, 1817-1901*, appeared in 1953. Following a number of similar specialized studies, beginning in the 1970s he came into his own in publishing with *Walter*

Breen's *Encyclopedia of United States and Colonial Proof Coins, 1722-1977* (1977), *The Encyclopedia of United States Gold and Silver Commemorative Coins, 1892-1954* (with A. Swiatak, 1981) and *The Complete Encyclopedia of United States and Colonial Coins* (1988). For his studies in the field of numismatics he twice received the American Numismatic Association's Heath Literary Award, in 1953 and 1991, and the Rittenhouse Society awarded him the title of "Numismatic Scholar of the Twentieth Century" in 1992, citing his "generous contribution to knowledge through [his] enormous number of books, catalogues and magazine and newspaper articles and columns, . . . [and] amazing breadth and depth of extensive research on all phases of American numismatics" ("Rittenhouse," 1992, p. 81).

It is one of his specialized books, *Dies and Coinage*, published in 1962 by Robert Bashlow, which provides a link to our topic here. Breen and Bashlow shared more interests than numismatics: both had an erotic interest in younger males. A wealthy coin and bullion dealer who had already created one press for numismatic publications, Bashlow was persuaded to fund another press for issuing material on "sexual questions." Called the Oliver Layton Press, its first book was *Greek Love* (1964), by Breen, who for it adopted the pseudonym created for him by Bashlow, by which he was to be known in homosexual circles, J. Z. Eglinton. Their next project was a scholarly magazine on the topic, the *International Journal of Greek Love*, edited by Breen under his pseudonym. The first issue appeared in January 1965 and included, among other things, an article on Ralph Nicholas Chubb by Timothy d'Arch Smith (writing as "Oliver Drummond"), a discussion of the identity of the "Mr. W. H." of Shakespeare's sonnets by Breen himself, Warren Johansson's translation of Nacke's essay on Albanian boy-love, and "Feminine Equivalents of Greek Love in Modern Fiction" by Marion Zimmer Bradley. The second issue appeared nearly two years later, in November 1966, with articles on an anonymous pederastic manuscript, by Toby Hammond (d'Arch Smith again), pederasty in Turkey by Jonathan Drake (J. Parker Rossman), and the later career of John Francis Bloxam, the author of *The Priest and the Acolyte*, by Breen. In the meantime, Oliver Layton had published the classic *Asbestos Diary*, the first book by Casimir Dukahz (pseudonym of Brian Drexel, d. 1988). There were two other items from the press: a second edition of Tuli Kupferberg's *Book of the Body* (1966)—Kupferberg had been involved with Allen Ginsberg, Julian Beck, Frank Kameny, Paul Krassner, and others in the New York City League for Sexual Freedom, which was the only advertiser in the first issue of *IJGL*—and the first edition of Michael Davidson's *Some Boys* (1969). Other projects announced—such as an English translation of Antonio Rocco's *Alcibiade Fanciullo a Scola* (a project which has defeated at least three publishers who have announced it, so that, scandalously, this important histori-

cal work became available in English only in 2001 by a different translator and publisher)—never came out. Editorial disagreements regarding how political *IJGL* should be led to a break between Breen and Bashlow in the early 1970s; an attempt to continue the journal with a new publisher under the title, *Kalos: On Greek Love*, but still under Breen's editorship yielded only one issue in the summer of 1976 before a second issue, the plates for which were later destroyed, was blocked by further editorial wrangling. Bashlow died in a hotel fire in Spain in 1980.

The dedication of *Greek Love* "to my beloved wife," and the presence in *IJGL* of Marion Zimmer Bradley, the science fiction author who had been incorporating homosexual themes in her stories since the mid-1950s and had also contributed to the *Mattachine Review* and the lesbian periodical *The Ladder*, is a link to another area of Breen's life and scholarship. Breen and Bradley had been married in February 1964. They had two children—a boy and a girl—from their marriage. In 1976 Breen, a frequent presence at science fiction conventions, published the first thorough study of Bradley's Darkover stories, *The Gemini Problem: A Study in Darkover*, and he also discusses her work, with that of many others, in his essay on science fiction and gender in the second issue of Sidney Smith's small press magazine *Dragonfly* (March 1976). (In that article he was also, as far as I know, the first to draw attention in print to homoerotic subtexts in the relation between Captain Kirk and Spock in *Star Trek*.) In *The Ladder*, in 1957, Bradley had defended lesbians entering heterosexual marriages, and Breen advocated the Greek model of married men who also loved adolescent boys. They separated after about twenty years of marriage, and were divorced in May 1990. Bradley died September 25, 1999.

Although based in Berkeley, California, Breen was frequently in New York for business in the 1970s and 1980s. He regularly stayed with Patrick MacGregor (b. 1947), bicycle repairman, poet, and proprietor of Blind Duck Press in the East Village, but if his stay extended to more than a few days I could count on him giving his host a break by calling and asking to visit my home in Brooklyn for an "after-dinner chat." He'd arrive around 7:00 p.m., and somewhere around 9:30 p.m. he would take out his Y Ching and throw his changes. This would inevitably produce something to the effect that it was "dangerous to cross the great water," which he would interpret as a warning that it was inadvisable to take the subway back under the East River, and ask to stay the night. He would then go to the spare bedroom to return with his stash and rolling papers. If it was at all a warm night, without a stitch of clothes on he would subsequently settle in on the couch and hold forth for another six hours or so on his research on Greek love (he was constantly revising the book for a proposed second edition); or other things such as explorations of his former lives; or the occasion when he had to de-

fend his family and friends by making "sigils of power" with his fingers and hurling "flaming pentacles" at Lovecraftian monsters which had attacked them while they were ensconced in a hot tub in Marin County; or the time he had been overcome by a mystic trance on a visit to Glastonbury and was granted a vision of purple flames towering above the ruins and visited by the Wise Old Man. (Another acquaintance, a New York University writing instructor who in the 1960s had penned a classic of pederastic pornography under the pseudonym Colin Murchison, had also heard this tale, and always insisted the Wise Old Man was probably Breen's confused recollection of a custodian trying to extract him from the flower bed into which he had toppled backward after ingesting too much of some mind-altering substance.) You never knew quite what to expect from Walter; but one can imagine the effect such vivid accounts must have had on thirteen-year-olds.

On another of his visits, with malice aforethought, I arranged for another Atlantean, Rick Nielsen, photographer and owner of a gay cardshop-annex-gallery on lower Seventh Avenue in the Village, to come around so they could compare their past lives. They could agree on nothing: one insisted Atlanteans wore yellow robes; the other insisted on white, and so forth. By 4:00 a.m., when they decided they must have lived on the lost continent in different eras, I had long since ceased to find the confrontation amusing. These were also the years when Breen was close with the artist and micro-press publisher Sidney Smith (b. 1950), who has left a portrait of him as the enthroned Pan in his book of drawings, *Manchild*.

It is not, however, his personal eccentricities, but his book *Greek Love* for which Breen deserves notice. The 500-page volume is divided into two almost equal parts: the first is a theoretical discussion and justification for man-boy homosexual relationships; the second is a survey of the cultural history of such relationships. It is very difficult to properly evaluate the book today, either for its theoretical argument or its historical scholarship.

It is almost impossible today to imagine oneself back in 1964. In light of the mass of historical research available on the subject today, it may seem absurd to think of attempting a cultural history of homosexuality in only 225 pages. But in 1964, aside from a burgeoning psychiatric literature which, while it disagreed on the causes of homosexuality and the prospects for its cure, was in total agreement that homosexuality was a mental illness which, untreated, doomed those afflicted with it to unhappiness and even suicide, one had a scattering of novels (many of which ended with suicide), and only a small handful of other texts such as Stearn's *Sixth Man*, Donald Webster Cory's *The Homosexual in America*, and, if one could find them, magazines such as *ONE* or the *Mattachine Review*, or, from France, *Arcadie*. The historical study most often cited as pioneering, *Jonathan to Gide*, by Noel I. Garde (Edgar H. Leoni), did not appear until that same year, 1964—and in

comparison with Garde's almost exclusive use of secondary sources, Breen's fifteen years of research in primary sources has produced a far more thoroughly grounded and reliable work. There are remarkably few errors, and although there are certainly many points where Breen's work has been superseded by further studies, the breadth and quality of his research is astounding. As a scholarly history of homosexuality and its manifestations in culture, Part II of *Greek Love* is simply the first thing of its kind ever undertaken in the United States, the first research anywhere in decades to pick up the work of the scholars in Hirschfeld's *Jahrbuch*, and several decades ahead of its time, standing out all the more for the absence of anything similar around it.

But is it a "scholarly history of *homosexuality*"? If we have difficulty imagining how little positive or even objective information was available about homosexuality in 1964, we will have even greater trouble today imagining a "homosexuality" that does not conform to the present hegemonic gay model of relations between individuals exclusively oriented to their own sex and that does not transgress either gender definitions or age or power distinctions—a model that denies any place within "homosexuality" to relationships where the age and power of the partners differ, and indeed denies them the status of "relationship" between "partners" altogether, relabeling them "sexual abuse," with "perpetrators" and "victims." (It also—although it does not affect us directly here—tosses overboard effeminate homosexuals and transvestites and has no use for anyone who is not an exclusive homosexual, except to demand that they "come out of their closet.") We have in fact invented for ourselves a new "problem in Greek ethics": not that the founders of Western civilization practiced homosexuality, but that they were "child abusers."

It is ironic that the gay community has become most vocal in its denunciation of "child abusers" at precisely the time that ever-accumulating research is making it increasingly clear that such age-differentiated relationships between individuals who were not exclusively homosexual have always been a major strand—if not *the* major strand—in the phenomenon we call homosexuality. Even those gays who grudgingly admit this fact, however, regard it as a sign of the "maturity" that their movement has gained over the past twenty years and now repudiate this current as part of their history. Yet it is equally possible to regard contemporary self-definitions of the gay community not as "maturity" but as a recent and perhaps short-lived response to cultural trends which are at best less than a century old. It may well be that as research progresses and the prevalence of age-differentiated relationships in male-male erotic relations (at least when viewed historically and cross-culturally) is forced upon us, we will come to view a work such as *Greek Love* as ahead of its time in another way, through its insis-

tence on examining relations of this sort as a dominant, if recently repressed, component of what we understand as homosexuality.

I have formulated that carefully because, to be totally frank, that is not what Breen is claiming for his Greek love, which he defines as the relation between an adult man and a younger boy (generally between ages twelve and seventeen) in which neither is exclusively homosexual—for only a man with heterosexual experience could guide the boy to a heterosexual outcome, which is the goal of Greek love. The man supplies a role model and the love (unconditional positive regard), which enables the boy's personality to develop healthily, performs a pedagogical function by teaching specific skills and generally initiating the boy into the adult world and its complexities and responsibilities (including preparing him for eventual heterosexual relations), and within this framework shares sexual or erotic experiences with the boy, who will then apply this experience in heterosexual practice. In return the man accepts the boy's love and admiration, and attains sexual satisfaction from their shared experience. In a position that harks back to the attitude taken by Friedlaender, Brand, and the *Der Eigene* circle toward Hirschfeld and "third sex" theories of homosexuality (arrived at independently, incidentally, as Breen does not seem to have known at the time of their critique of Hirschfeld), Breen in fact argues that Greek love has nothing to do with androphile homosexuality in any of its manifestations from Achilles and Patroclus through Genet (nor, for that matter, with Ulrichs' and Hirschfeld's "inverts"); for Breen, Greek love is the *true* tradition of male-male relations, to whose history these others have wrongly laid claim. This deposition of Greek love from its rightful place is largely, he argues, the result of antisexual mores, changes in the role and status of the adolescent in our culture over the past couple of centuries, and explicit campaigning on the part of the usurpers. He also, however, clearly distinguishes Greek love from pedophilia, or attraction to boys under the age of puberty; although he cites studies which indicate that in the absence of force or coercion, or later damaging interventions producing guilt, such activities are generally not harmful, he strongly denies that they can have any of the positive effects he associates with Greek love.

Not unexpectedly, then, the heart of Breen's argument is found in the chapter of the book entitled "Greek Love As a Solution to a Social Problem," and the two chapters of "case histories," "Uncomplicated Greek Love Affairs" and "Difficult Greek Love Affairs," in which the personal and social benefits he claims for Greek love are demonstrated, either by the success of an affair in making the boy a productive adult, or in showing the potential for that outcome destroyed by hostile social reactions. Also not unexpectedly, given the era in which he was writing, the "social problem" resolves itself into those 1950s bugaboos, juvenile delinquency and alien-

ation. Friedenberg's *Vanishing Adolescent* is much cited, and the spirit of Paul Goodman, particularly in *Growing Up Absurd*, hovers over the whole (the footnotes reveal that Goodman and Breen evidently carried on a correspondence on this topic). If one is clued in to look, and knows the connection between the two authors, echoes of Breen's argument (in more academic garb and minus the sexual dimension) can be found a decade and a half later in *After Punishment, What?* (1980), by Yale's J. Parker Rossman.

One of the book's most curious features is a concluding written exchange on Breen's claims between Breen and Dr. Albert Ellis. Ellis was evidently approached because of his views—somewhat more liberal than his professional colleagues'—on homosexuality, as espoused in his *Sex Without Guilt*. Although Ellis praises the thoroughness of the research and clarity of his argument, he flatly rejects Breen's thesis: he doubts that love or even positive regard is the solution to the problems of alienated youth, and if it was, therapists and not passionate male lovers would be the proper individuals to administer it. Neither was the gay community as it developed after 1969 impressed, although some figures such as Jim Kepner, who have stood somewhat outside the mainstream of post-Stonewall gay organization, have acknowledged Eglinton's influence on their understanding of homosexuality.

Nor, finally, were later boy-love activists impressed. Daniel Tsang labels Greek love "the over-romanticized, idealized and often sexist and ageist relationship between a male adult 'mentor' and his young 'student'"; since gay liberation, he says, we have seen the light and rejected such "archaic" ideals with their goal of "a man guiding a young boy on his road to marriage, nuclear family, good citizenship and other aspects of straightdom" (Tsang, 1981, pp. 8-9). Tom Reeves took a similar potshot at men who "help boys grow up to be normal drones and good citizens" (Reeves, 1980, p. 3). They had hit the mark squarely: unquestionably *Greek Love* is vulnerable in attempting to apply an argument from utility to sexuality, seeking to justify the acceptance of a category of sexual relationships on the grounds of its purported social benefit, rather than demanding its equal right simply because it exists—and worse yet, like other artifacts of the 1950s, it was making the production of conforming individuals the criteria for that utility. Had they stopped there they would have been better off, but these critics seem oblivious to the fact that, although changing the goal, they apparently replicate the structure they also claim to detest, merely replacing "mentors" with members of a sort of revolutionary vanguard leading boys *away* from the evils of "straightdom." Others in the new movement, seeking also to avoid the charge of seduction, chose to emphasize the role of man-boy love in socializing "gay boys," ignoring the reality that most boys who become involved in such relationships ultimately become practicing heterosexuals.

Once again, the “mentor” structure was affirmed, this time explicitly, while rejecting the social goals Breen proposed for Greek love.

In view of Breen’s rejection of Bashlow’s desire to make *IJGL* more “political” and this hostility from the founders of NAMBLA, it is perhaps surprising to find Breen involved with the North American Man-Boy Love Association at all after its founding. However, J. Z. Eglinton was one of the keynote speakers at the organization’s second conference in New York, at the Church of the Beloved Disciple, in the spring of 1979. Notes of his speech are found in *NAMBLA News* 2 (June 1979); it is striking that he no longer argues for acceptance of Greek love on the ground of its purported benefits to society, instead merely insisting that boys often benefit from experiencing loving intergenerational relationships. The major problem, he still maintains, is that these relationships are illegal; society should understand them, tolerate them, give them room to develop and flourish, and judge each relationship by its result. In *NAMBLA Journal* 3 (successor to the *News*, March 1980) he favorably reviews *Puppies*, by John Valentine (Chester Anderson, 1932-1991, of Haight Ashbury’s “news before it happens”), the journal of a boy lover who, although wearing Levis rather than a toga, comes close to embodying Breen’s ideal of Greek love. Except for occasional letters to NAMBLA publications, J. Z. Eglinton then fades from view as an advocate of Greek love.

In 1990 Breen was arrested on child molestation charges; the exact circumstances are hazy, as his legal strategy was to keep the arrest quiet and try to negotiate a settlement without publicity. He eventually (and perhaps suspiciously) was offered and accepted a plea bargain of three years’ probation in return for pleading guilty to a felony charge involving a boy of fourteen or under. Shortly thereafter, in September 1991, at a public coin valuation day in Beverly Hills, he was arrested again—this time on eight felony molestation counts involving the thirteen-year-old son of acquaintances. There have been suggestions that these accusations were already in police hands when the bargain was offered, meaning that law enforcement officials knew this anticipated arrest would constitute a violation of his probation leading to automatic imprisonment and a long mandatory sentence when convicted on the new charges. In March 1992, after having surgery, he was diagnosed with terminal liver cancer. The trial on the new charges was delayed several times because of his health, but he eventually was sentenced to ten years’ imprisonment. Walter Breen died on April 28, 1993, in the hospital ward of the state prison at Chino, California.

Although one numismatic journal carried an obituary, no gay publication reported his death—nor did NAMBLA’s *Bulletin*. After many “past lives,” to take him at his word, in eras when his Greek love could be expressed and appreciated, he had the misfortune this time to be born into our time, when

such activity is calumniated and persecuted. He left behind his book, a monument of scholarship in its time. As idiosyncratic, romanticized, idealized—and dated—as its apologia for Greek love may be, it is a testament to an irradicable strain in human experience, one of the many facets of homosexual love: the love of a man for a youth and of a youth for a man.

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Warren Johansson (1934-1994)

William A. Percy III



Warren Johansson was, quite simply, the most extraordinary person I have ever known. Although a good number of our other pioneers in the homophile movement combined keen intellect and passionate commitment with various forms of eccentricity, none, in my opinion, matched Warren's *mélange* of brilliance, erudition, generosity, and mystery. As all who knew him well can attest, he was a gay cabalist par excellence, a labyrinth of profundities and secrets. I spent much time with him for almost a decade, during the last half of which he lived in my house, yet for years I did not even know his real name. To this day, eight years after his death, he remains a fascinating enigma.

Born Peter Joseph Wallfield in Philadelphia, February 21, 1934, Warren early on exhibited a genius for linguistics. In time he mastered every modern European language except Basque (unrelated to any other known language) and the Finn-Ugrian (Siberia-derived) tongues. He read Greek and Hebrew in their multifarious forms, and although I am a professor of medieval history, a field noted for its Latinists, I've never met anyone who equaled Warren's facility with ancient, church, and modern scholarly Latin. These skills gave him access to the wellspring of true historical scholarship: original texts and their mutations. He could read them all. More than anyone, perhaps, he really *did* read them all, including, while he was still an undergraduate, the entire twenty-three-volume set of the *Jahrbuch Für Sexuelle Zwischenstufen* (*Yearbook for sexual intergrades*), the world's first periodical to publish articles on homosexuality by experts in numerous fields, edited by the legendary Magnus Hirschfeld in Berlin between 1899 and 1923. Warren was, perhaps, the leading American authority not only on Hirschfeld but also on all Germanic and Slavic writers on homosexuality. His reach extended far beyond that, how-