

and this unfortunately has been taken as a source by several biographers. It was Harris who invented the famous episode of the hordes of homosexuals running over to France as soon as Wilde was convicted. The publication of the Wilde letters automatically makes more recent biographies more accurate, and Ellmann's is a tour de force.

Wilde has been claimed as the author of "The Priest and the Acolyte" (a German translation gives his name as author) and of the pornographic novel *Teleny*, but these attributions are wrong. There is little actual homosexuality in Wilde's writings, mostly in *De Profundis* and *The Portrait of Mr. W. H.*, a novella about Shakespeare. There are some other letters, some poems, and some parts of *Dorian Gray* that reflect Wilde's homosexuality, but not much. It was Douglas rather than Wilde who coined the famous phrase "The Love that dare not speak its name," although Wilde ably defended himself, and was even applauded, when he was asked about this phrase during one of his trials. The one great mystery about him that remains to be solved is why he did not flee to France when he had every chance to do so on the eve of his arrest.

Oscar Wilde was the first famous homosexual to be pilloried by the mass press. On the Continent the ordeal to which he was subjected was widely interpreted as a sign of English hypocrisy and moral backwardness. Yet America tended to follow Britain in its condemnation. In the long run, a certain compensation (though not for Wilde himself) may be detected in the fact that, in the wake of the enormous publicity of the case, in English-speaking countries it became somewhat easier than before to speak of homosexuality, however negatively.

As a thinker Wilde was less subtle than Paul Valéry, less radical than Friedrich Nietzsche, less persevering than his friend André Gide. Yet his books are still read, *The Importance of Being Earnest* often reappears in the theatre, and Wilde

continues to rank as an incomparable wit. Gay people honor him as a martyr.

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Stephen Wayne Foster

WILLIAM III (1650–1702)

Stadhouder of the Netherlands and king of England. The son of William II, stadhouder of the United Netherlands, and Mary, the oldest daughter of Charles I of England, he was born at the Hague after his father's death. A revolution precipitated by Louis XIV's invasion of the Netherlands (1672) caused to him to be made stadhouder for life. In 1664 William Bentinck (1649–1709) joined the Prince's household as a page and instantly endeared himself to his master. In a year the page became a courtier and a key figure in the household. It was, however, ten years later that Bentinck gave the most striking proof of his devotion to the Prince. On April 3, 1675, William fell ill to smallpox, the disease that had killed his father and mother. For 16 days he hovered between life and death, while Bentinck cared lovingly for him. It was only twenty years later that the Venetian ambassador in London learned the full story. When the Prince of Orange was in danger of dying from smallpox, the doctors believed that the violent progress of the disease could be stopped only if "a young man of the same age, lying in bed with the Prince, exposed himself to the dangerous contagion of his illness." Bentinck volunteered his services at once, and the warmth of his body made the Prince sweat so heavily that the smallpox broke out. The Prince recovered, but Bentinck, after contact with the "dangerous fluids," fell ill himself.

William's marriage in 1677 to the English princess Mary, the Protestant daughter of the later James II, was followed in February 1678 by Bentinck's to Mary's lady-in-waiting Anne Villiers. Long in touch with the English opposition to Mary's Roman Catholic father, William let his Protestant sympathies be known in England. After secret negotiations, he crossed the Channel (1688) with an army of 15,000, was joined by most of the leading men in England, and took the throne of James II, whom he allowed to go into exile in France. Effected without bloodshed, the so-called Glorious Revolution was the decisive victory in the long struggle between Parliament and the crown, since William had to accept the Bill of Rights (1689) and to give Parliament control of finances and the army.

William's policies did not, however, endear him to his English subjects, and none of his Dutch courtiers was especially popular, but easily the most hated man at court was Bentinck, created Earl of Portland at the coronation. Soon after William's landing, the English realized how much he depended on the advice of this unbending foreigner, who was nicknamed "the Wooden Man." The English peers resented Portland's high-handed manner and the jealousy with which he guarded the king, who did nothing without his approval, while in turn William's lavish generosity soon made him one of the wealthiest men in the country, Groom of the Stole, Treasurer of the Privy Purse, and more. The only Englishman who could compete for William's friendship was Henry Sidney, created Earl of Rodney at the coronation, and loyal to his sovereign even against his own interests; he was tall, handsome, and honest, but a mediocrity who made promises he did not keep and a drunkard as well. William's lack of interest in women, who "missed the homage due to their sex," was another cause of his unpopularity in England. After the death of Queen Mary (1694), who had remained childless during seventeen years of mar-

riage, he took no new wife. When he lay on his deathbed, Bentinck was the last to bid him farewell; "for the last time," he murmured, holding the favorite's hand to his heart.

William III was the most European figure that the House of Orange has produced; for some thirty years he was one of the makers of European history. As protagonist of the Glorious Revolution in England, he was the first king to rule with the consent of Parliament, and by choosing men of Whig persuasion as his ministers, he began (1696) the system of a responsible cabinet. His homosexuality—of which rumors circulated among the high nobility—enabled him to form a lasting bond with his favorite, William Bentinck, who not only saved his life but served him loyally to the end of his reign.

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Warren Johansson

WILLIAMS, TENNESSEE (THOMAS LANIER) (1911–1983)

Major American playwright and a significant fiction writer and poet. Born in Mississippi—the setting, along with New Orleans and St. Louis, of many of his most important plays—Williams has been considered to be a Southern writer, but his influence, as the leading proponent of post-World War II psychological realism, has been international.

A prolific writer, Williams produced about seventy plays, including some one-acts, revisions, and works apparently lost and not yet published, as well as three novels, six volumes of short stories, two of poetry, and one of memoirs. Awarded both a Group Theatre and a Rockefeller grant in 1939, he had his first major professional production in 1944, *The Glass Menagerie*,