



YOURCENAR, MARGUERITE (PSEUDONYM OF MARGUERITE DE CRAYENCOUR; 1903–1987)

Outstanding Belgian-born woman of letters, writing in French. A novelist, short story writer, essayist, poet, playwright, and translator, in 1980 she became the first woman elected to the French Academy. Long a United States resident, in 1982 she was named to the American Academy of Arts and Letters.

Although not an extremely prolific writer, Yourcenar published books beginning in 1921. As her output was on a consistently high level, she built up a reputation for being an author's author. Well versed in the world of classical antiquity, she was seen as a writer dealing with the universal issues of life and death in a detached, but hardly indifferent light. Translation of many of her works into English helped her win the broader audience she always deserved. Extremely reticent about her private life, Yourcenar was working at the time of her death on her autobiography *The Labyrinth of the World*, of which the first two volumes (about her mother's and father's families) have been published.

Throughout her career, Yourcenar showed much interest in male homosexual behavior. She wrote a significant essay on the poet Constantine Cavafy and the book *Mishima, or the Vision of the Void*. Her most important pre-World War II fictional works, the two short novels *Alexis* (1929) and *Coup de Grâce* (1937), inspired by André Gide's use of the first-person form, deal with homosexual feeling without direct statement of the theme. In the two major novels of her later

years, *The Memoirs of Hadrian* (1951) and *The Abyss* (1968), homosexuality is treated in broader social contexts, the Roman empire and sixteenth-century Europe, respectively. Yourcenar admired Rainer Maria Rilke and Thomas Mann. She translated novels by Henry James and Virginia Woolf into French. Her fictional works were collected in 1982 in a Pléiade edition, signaling literary canonization.

BIBLIOGRAPHY. Mathieu Galey, *With Open Eyes: Conversations with Marguerite Yourcenar*, Boston: Beacon, 1984; Pierre L. Hom, *Marguerite Yourcenar*, Boston: Twayne, 1985.

Peter G. Christensen

YOUTH

Perhaps the most forgotten, invisible minority in the modern industrial world is gay and lesbian teen-age youth. This condition is changing as an increasing number of young people are exploring and expressing sexual identities beyond the heterosexual ones traditionally recognized by society and its agents. Teens are faced, however, with both a hostile and an unbelieving world; they are told "You can't be a homosexual—I won't allow it," which amounts to saying "Society won't allow it."

Historical Patterns. The conceptualization of adolescence as a stage between childhood and adulthood is relatively recent, along with many current beliefs regarding the sexuality of teenagers. Today's parental and pedagogical concern over the development of a homosexual identity by teen-agers could not have arisen when the concept of homosexual identity had not taken root—