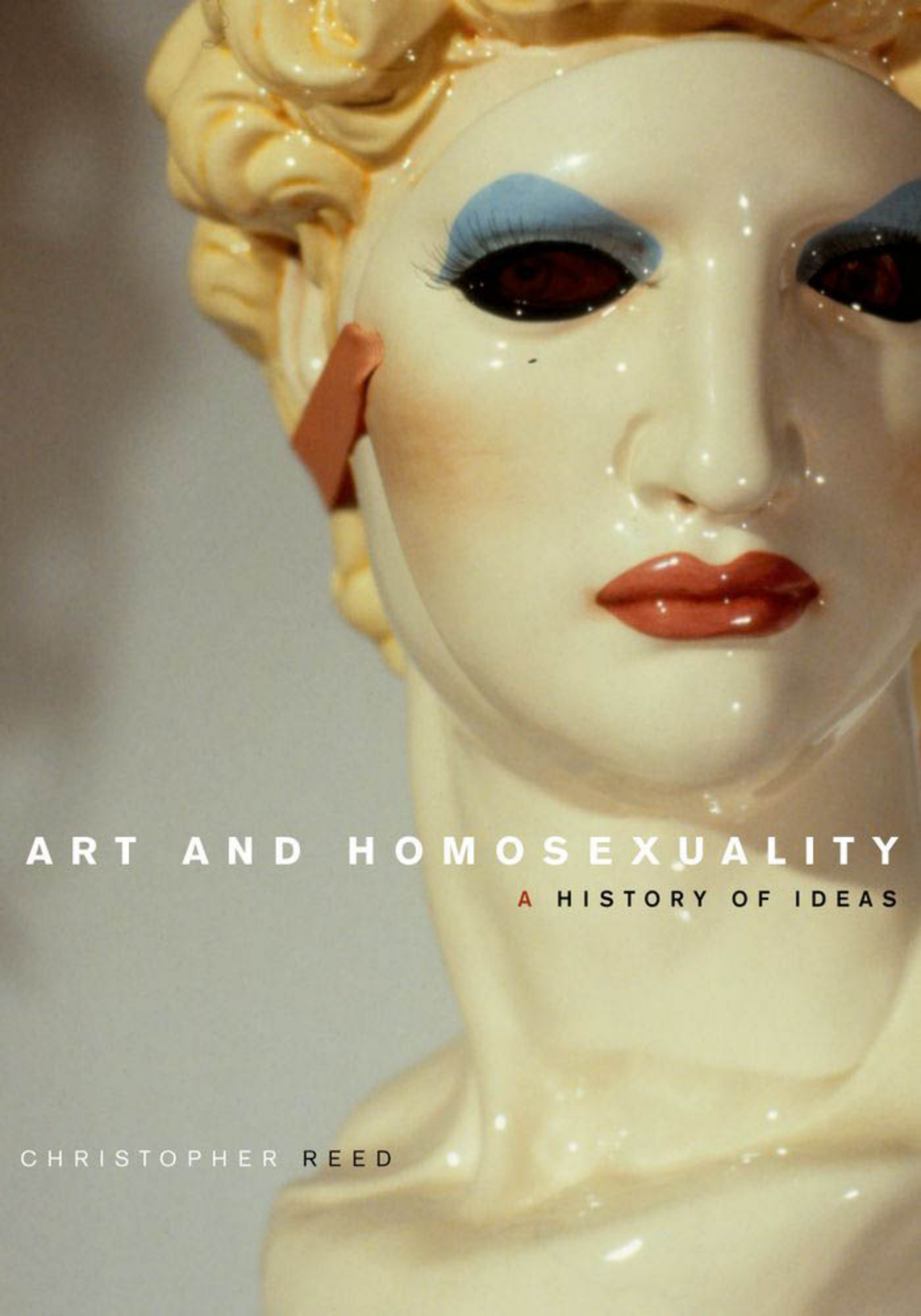

ART AND HOMOSEXUALITY

A HISTORY OF IDEAS

CHRISTOPHER REED

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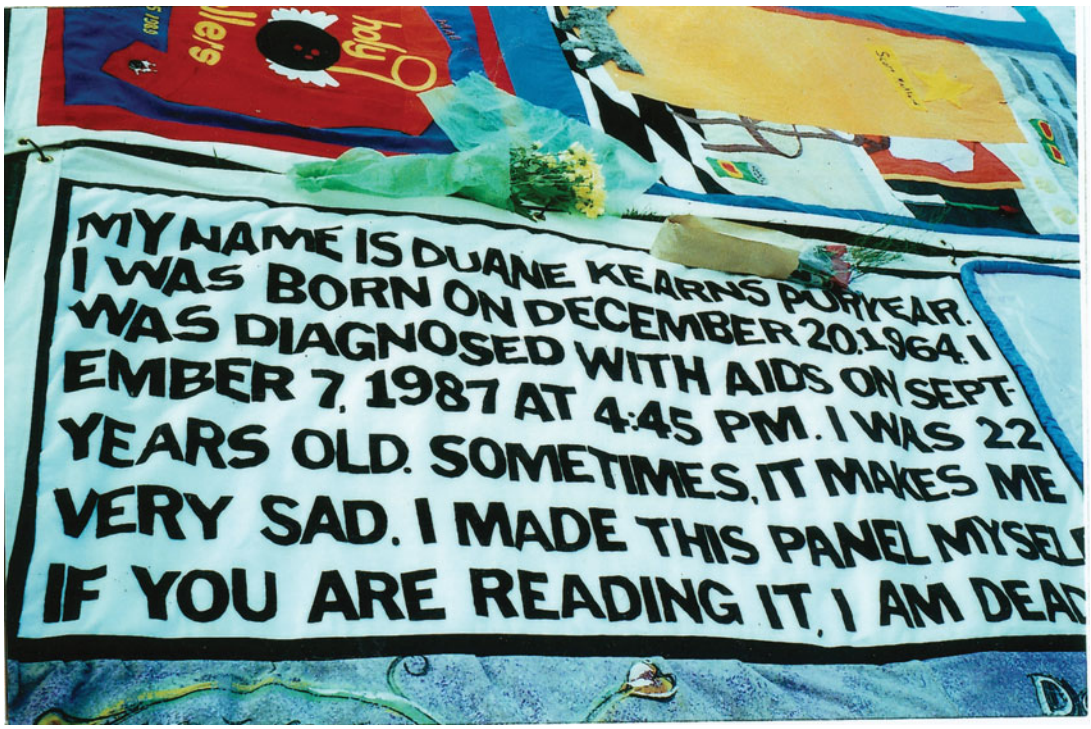

Panel from the AIDS Project Memorial Quilt, discussed in chapter 7. Photograph courtesy of Doug and Martha Puryear.

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In memory of Tee Corinne, Nikos Stangos,
and all those who made the history this book tries to tell.

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ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

THIS BOOK HAD three inspirations. The first, quite literal, inspiration was Nikos Stangos, who asked me to write it. For reasons outlined in the introduction, Nikos had trouble finding an established art historian to write this book, which he passionately believed was needed. It has taken over ten years to produce, with the happy result that I think I now may be the more established scholar that Nikos initially wanted. The far more unhappy result is that Nikos died without seeing it. I hope he would be proud of it. I hope even more that the book will have the effect on readers he imagined.

The second inspiration for this book has been my students. As I have taught courses dealing with sexuality, gender identity, and art over the last (almost) two decades, I have been struck by their desire for a text that offers a history of these issues, which are so often unhelpfully framed as either timeless or as fleeting controversies of the moment. In recent years, I have tried out segments of this book on these classes, benefited from their suggestions, and been inspired by their enthusiasm.

The third inspiration for this book has been my colleagues. A work with this historical scope necessarily relies on the research of other scholars, who are acknowledged in the notes. I want to thank, in particular, for their scholarly and collegial example, encouragement, and suggestions, Tee Corinne, Harmony Hammond, Carolyn Kastner, Jonathan Katz, Tirza Latimer, Richard Meyer, Jim Saslow, and Kenneth Silver. For their suggestions and information, I also wish to thank Libby

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Thanks to Christopher Campbell, Melissa Cooper, and Christopher Shirley for help with the technical production of the manuscript and illustrations. With the help of Kallie Feigenbaum, I made every effort to identify copyright holders and secure permissions for reproductions. If I failed in any case, I apologize sincerely. Expenses associated with the illustrations were generously subvened by the College of Liberal Arts, the English Department, and the Institute for the Arts and Humanities at the Pennsylvania State University. I am very grateful to scholars and artists who allowed for their work to be reproduced in this context. I also want to thank Shannon McLachlan at Oxford University Press, and the other staff at the press, for their enthusiasm and their hard work in making this book a reality.

Comprehensiveness is not possible in a global survey. Because this book traces the large currents that, I argue, have structured ideas of art and sexual identity in relation to one another, it necessarily replicates aspects of the canon, but I strongly regret that I could not foreground more work by contemporary artists, many of whom make remarkable art for little reward. I enthusiastically refer readers to more concentrated surveys, especially Harmony Hammond's *Lesbian Art in America*, so rich in both images and analysis.

Finally, a word about the format of this book. Readers will note the absence of footnotes and the presence of illustrations, some with descriptive captions and some consisting entirely of primary-source texts. These deviations from the conventional formats of scholarly books are intended to invite a diverse readership, while *performing* what the book describes: a history that resists authoritative taxonomies, that brings together diverse sources in diverse ways, that rewards sensibilities attuned to surprise, and that opens itself to varieties of interpretation. That said, bibliographic entries, page references for all quoted secondary literature, and commentary on secondary literature are provided in the notes for each chapter.

ART AND HOMOSEXUALITY

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ART AND HOMOSEXUALITY

AN OVERVIEW

"IF YOU REALLY want to hurt your parents and you don't have nerve enough to be homosexual, the least you can do is go into the arts." This remark in one of Kurt Vonnegut's novels suggests how firmly art and homosexuality are linked in the popular imagination. Calling someone "arty" or "artistic" has often been a euphemism for homosexuality, and political debates about homosexuality have often played out as arguments about images. Yet surprisingly little study has focused on the relationship between art and sexual identity. Although a few recent books offer surveys of gay and lesbian artists and imagery, the conceptual links between art and sexual identity have been neglected by specialists as consistently as they are taken for granted by the general public. In both tone and content, this book aims to bridge these gaps, synthesizing recent scholarship in the histories of art and sexual identity in order to propose a broad—and broadly accessible—narrative of art's relation to sexual identity.

For, in fact, the general public is right: art and homosexuality have been significantly intertwined. The ways the histories of each are commonly presented, however, makes it difficult to acknowledge these connections. The paucity of books surveying gay or lesbian artists reflects prejudices that long prevented, and still discourage, scholarly attention to the links between art and homosexuality. Conventional art scholarship shies away from divisive social issues, habitually treating art as something that is—or should be—purely aesthetic or an act of individual expression with (paradoxically) universal appeal. An identity as controversial and collective as homosexuality fits awkwardly with these conventions. For

many historians of sexuality, it is sexual identity that suffers from being linked to the aestheticizing and universalizing conventions of art history and criticism. Homosexual identity, they say, is an invention of modern Western science, so it is there—not in art, and not outside the West or in deeper history—that we must look to understand it.

Both these attitudes reveal a failure of historical imagination. It is true that the concepts signified today by our use of both the terms *art* and *homosexuality* are related products of the seismic social changes that transformed Western culture in the nineteenth century, turning sex acts and what might be called art acts (the processes of painting and sculpture, for example) into manifestations of personal identity. These reconceptualizations (discussed in detail in chapter 3) were closely linked, with each term coming to serve as a symptom or indicator of the other. But the relative novelty of modern conceptions of art and homosexuality does not mean that they are without roots in the more distant past or without analogies outside Western culture. And because art and homosexuality were so closely linked, artists not only reflected but also contributed creatively and substantially to conceptions of homosexuality, often in ways that subverted the scientists' ideas. This book offers an introductory overview to this complicated historical field.

The argument that "homosexuality" is a modern invention was most influentially presented by the historian Michel Foucault in the first volume of his *History of Sexuality*, published in 1976. Foucault argued that before the nineteenth century what we think of as homosexuality was not a coherent conceptual category—what men did together was not seen as like what women did together, for instance, and erotic behavior was not classified according to the biological sex of the participants. In the nineteenth century, new theories of personality developed by the increasingly powerful medical professions prompted the classification of "people's pleasures," so that, in Foucault's often-quoted words, "the nineteenth-century homosexual became a personage, a past, a case history, and a childhood, in addition to being a type of life, a life form. . . . Nothing that went into his total composition was unaffected by his sexuality. It was everywhere present in him: at the root of all his actions . . . less as a habitual sin than as a singular nature." This marked the invention of "the homosexual" as an identity.

With a few key nouns changed, much the same story could be told about art. Premodern definitions of art emphasized technique or skill in ways much closer to what is today called "craft." In the thirteenth century, for example, Thomas Aquinas wrote of the "arts" of shoemaking, cooking, juggling, and grammar, as well as sculpture and painting. Not until the late eighteenth century were the "fine" arts finally separated from other professions. At this point they were reconceived—most notably by philosopher Emmanuel Kant—no longer as manifestations of learned knowledge or skill, but as outpourings of the innate individual genius of a specially gifted type of person: the artist. These histories came together in the late nineteenth

century when the names of particular artists and critics (Michelangelo, Oscar Wilde), and even the idea of art itself (to be "Aesthetic"), became associated with—even signifiers of—homosexual identity.

Though current notions of art and homosexuality are founded on these modern ideas about identity, however, their development can be seen as the outcome of much longer histories. The study of this relationship before the nineteenth century or outside the European context (including Europe's colonies) is controversial, for it exposes the conflicting assumptions of two common approaches to historical study. It is a platitude—nonetheless true—that histories reveal as much about the purposes and perspectives of historians as they do about the pasts they describe. Historical narratives record, not the static truth of a particular time and place, but an interaction between *two* cultures: one under observation and one doing the observing. Many histories presume identification with the culture under observation: continuities with the past are presented as traditions that explain, and often justify, the chronicler's present. Other histories are premised on assumptions of difference, with the distance between the chronicler and a "primitive" ideal or "degenerate" counter-ideal proposed to admonish or affirm the historian's own society.

Histories of art fall conventionally into the first category. Even the way art museums present work from a wide variety of artistic traditions—flat objects framed on the wall, bulky objects on pedestals—homogenizes everything on display into the basic categories of modern Western art: paintings and sculptures made solely for aesthetic contemplation. It is easy for viewers to leave museums believing that world history justifies current definitions of art, without realizing that many of the images they have seen framed as "paintings" have been removed from their original context as components of bound documents, painted furniture, altarpieces, or spaces where they were meant to interact with other kinds of objects and promote activities other than aesthetic contemplation. Likewise, objects presented by museums as "sculpture" were often created as utensils of practical life or objects of religious ritual intended to be used and seen in conjunction with other objects and activities absent from the museum setting. Such display practices parallel our culture's often-stated belief in the timeless universality of aesthetics, encouraging us to see objects from other times and places as fundamentally like our own "art" and, therefore, accessible to our habits of visual analysis and delight. Despite critiques from fields like anthropology, a great deal of art history remains grounded in these assumptions.

Histories of homosexuality, on the other hand, generally have been cast as studies of difference. The Victorian explorer Richard Burton, in a lengthy appendix to his translation of *The Book of the Thousand Nights and a Night*, located homosexuality in what he called the "Sotadic Zone," which encircled the world at the latitude of the Mediterranean and Arab countries, broadening out as it moved away from Europe so that it

included not just China and Japan, but all of the indigenous peoples of the Americas—in short, this "zone" was almost everywhere except his own part of Europe. This tendency of authors to distance themselves from the homosexuality they studied was institutionalized into rhetorics of "objectivity" assumed by the developing fields of anthropology and sociology (debates over alternative perspectives, such as "participant observation," remain lively in these fields). One lingering example of this distancing strategy in popular culture is the association of homosexuals with the vanished city of Sodom. The Bible (Genesis 19) tells how Sodom was destroyed because angels visiting Lot were threatened by townsmen demanding to "know" the guests (the meaning of the verb is debated by linguists); when Lot protected his visitors, offering the mob his daughters instead, God spared him from the punitive destruction of his inhospitable city. Biblical references to this narrative treat it as a parable about sustaining virtue in a corrupt environment and about a host's responsibilities toward his guests. Subsequent interpretations of the story, however, made it a parable about nonprocreative sexual aggression, so that Europeans later called men who engaged in anal or oral sex—with other men or with women—Sodomites. Like Burton's theories, this interpretation cast nonnormative sexuality as a form of primitive foreignness, identified with a time and place far away.

These competing historical perspectives help account for the absence of a synthetic history of art and homosexuality: the history of art, which is usually based on assumptions of continuity, is not easily integrated with the history of homosexuality, which is conventionally premised on alienation. The power of the art market, in which art derives much of its worth from claims for universal aesthetic appeal, augments these divisions and helps explain the defensiveness of many artists, gallerists, and curators toward linking the history of art with the alienating history of homosexuality.

Of course, the history of homosexuality does not upset everyone. For men and women coming to terms with same-sex erotic attraction (in themselves or in others), connections to the past can prove deeply empowering. On this level, readers are encouraged to draw such strength from this book. But we should resist temptations to construct a history of homosexuality as simply a new narrative of continuity. The homogenization of historically distinct forms of homosexuality not only erases very real differences among cultures, but ultimately undermines the value of difference itself, short-circuiting impulses to validate expressions of sexual difference. Without denying the value of transhistorical points of identification, therefore, readers of this book are asked, not just to notice distinctions between cultures, but to welcome this information as evidence of the diversity of human experience and expression.

An example may help in thinking through these theoretical propositions. The competing impulses for writing history are clear in the study of ancient Greece and Rome. Since the Renaissance, Western culture

conceived itself as rooted in Athenian ideals of individual freedom, democracy, and erudition. Latin terms (such as *senate*) and Greek forms (such as temples) were revived to sanction a wide range of institutions. As interest in ancient Greece and Rome led to greater and wider knowledge of their history, however, the gap between ancient and modern conceptualization of sexuality led classics scholars to censor translations of ancient texts and shy away from analysis of these issues (discussed in chapter 1). At the same time, sexual reformers exaggerated Greek precedents for same-sex eroticism, coining terms like *Greek love* for sexual attraction between men or *sapphism* and *lesbianism* (from the Greek poet Sappho, who lived on the isle of Lesbos) for sexual relationships between women. The importance of such ideas to burgeoning movements for the rights and recognition of homosexuals in the late twentieth century is registered by the titles of pioneering books like *Sappho Was a Right-On Woman* (a 1972 manifesto for lesbians) and *Socrates, Plato, and Guys Like Me* (a 1985 account of the travails of a gay school teacher).

It is not clear how earnestly anyone took such historical identification, however. Neither of these books argues for the attention-getting polemic of its title—indeed, neither text mentions its cited forerunner at all. Nevertheless, a strong counter-identificatory trend emerged among historians following Foucault, who insisted, to quote Jeffrey Weeks, that "the social integration of forms of pedagogic homosexual relations in ancient Greece have *no* continuity with contemporary notions of homosexual identity." Again a title encapsulates the argument: David Halperin's *One Hundred Years of Homosexuality* (1990) argues that ancient Greek conceptions of sexuality were so different from our own that the modern term *homosexuality* cannot be applied to cultures before 1892, when the word was invented; thus, properly speaking, there have only been "one hundred years of homosexuality." But Halperin's text, too, falls short of the polemic of its title, for he acknowledges, "It is not exactly my intention to argue that homosexuality, as we commonly understand it today, didn't exist before 1892." Looking back on his 1990 book over a decade later, in *How to Do the History of Homosexuality* (2002), Halperin described its limited polemical "aim" as "to snip the thread that connected ancient Greek paederasty with modern homosexuality in the minds of modern historians."

Such debates may seem like squabbles over semantics, but they have important consequences for how we understand both the history and current status of homosexuality. As Halperin explains, his earlier book "took seriously the possibility that human beings in the past might have had radically different experiences of erotic subjectivity," and thus it raised the question of how we might "experience our own sexuality differently if we experienced it as something historical, as well as something instinctual." The challenge posed by historians like Weeks and Halperin to homogenizing views of homosexuality is of enormous value. In an era when well-meaning presentations of sexual identity often insist that

homosexuals are "just like" heterosexuals—with the built-in implications (1) that homosexuals are just like each other, (2) that heterosexuals all experience sexual identity the same way, (3) that sex has always been just like what it is today, and (4) that a good way to understand someone else is to transfer our own self-knowledge onto them—we need to be reminded to respect historical, cultural (including subcultural), and individual differences. But the historians' position also can be critiqued on a number of counts. First, it exaggerates the naiveté of those who invoked historical precedent to support modern sexual identities. Gay or lesbian activists generally intended such comparisons to be as broadly rhetorical as other invocations of history to support forms of identity—using the term *Gallic* (a reference to the ancient Gauls) to refer to French national identity, for example. To prohibit gays and lesbians from modes of rhetoric commonly used by and for other groups obscures how sexuality functions amid other modern forms of identity and risks alienating historians from nonspecialist audiences, whose rhetorical sophistication is underestimated. Second—and somewhat paradoxically—historians who insist upon distinctions between ancient and modern conceptions of homosexuality risk their own kind of homogenization in the implications that, given a cataclysmic shift in conceptions of sex at the end of the nineteenth century, (1) the history of homosexuality has remained relatively static ever since and (2) a single notion of homosexuality characterizes Western culture today. In fact, the "homosexuals" of 1893 would be baffled by many aspects of modern lesbian and gay identities, while supposedly premodern notions concerning same-sex erotic attraction persist in many contexts to this day.

In short, the world is not as simple as binaries of "same vs. different." Differences lurk within narratives of cultural continuity, while sparks of identification and empathy may be struck in the comparison of cultures far removed from one another. In an effort to acknowledge this complexity, the first chapter of this book addresses the prevailing definitions of both art and homosexuality by scrutinizing these terms in relation to a variety of cultural traditions.

This may be schematized as a matrix of continuities and disjunctures between various ideas of art and homosexuality. Listed along the top of the matrix are categories that historians have distinguished as different conceptual forms used to understand behaviors that look homoerotic to modern eyes:

- normal behavior (adolescent play or formal initiatory rites) associated with maturation;
- sexual encounters in which one person is perceived as transcending gender norms;
- a separate identity shared by people of comparable age and status, who are seen as constitutionally different from those who engage in heterosexual sex (this historically rare perception of distinctly homosexual men and women is what came into being in the nineteenth

century and now characterizes conventional perceptions of homosexuals within modern industrialized cultures); and
- a performative role, which does not imply an inevitable or permanent core identity, but is a self-conscious choice among options available in a particular society (this model is often associated with capitalist consumer culture and the term *postmodernism,* but also seems to apply historically to Tokugawa Japan).

Ranged along the other axis of the matrix are conceptions of how crafted objects (what we call "art") might relate to sexual identity in different cultures:

- depictions of homoerotic acts or of the people associated with them, whether these are made by insiders or outsiders or for admonition or arousal (effects that may be largely in the eye of the beholder);
- eroticized objects associated with same-sex interactions, even if they do not illustrate sex acts; and
- products of sexual minorities—that is, people identified as deviant or different because of their homosexuality.

Arrayed between these two axes would be crafted objects, ranging from European paintings to Japanese sex toys. These objects suggest the multiple and various points of contact between art and homosexuality and challenge our concepts of both.

One point of this matrix is to emphasize that constructions of art and sexual identity throughout history are *both* similar to and different from our modern ideas. The cliché that gay men make good decorators because they combine masculine and feminine traits is similar to Native American ideas about the *berdache*, while the flutes used in initiatory practices of tribal New Guinea might compare with the props or accessories of modern sex-defined subcommunities, though what sex means in these various cultures is very different. Another point of the matrix is that the meanings of images or crafted objects change over time. The togas and lyres depicted in Greek vase paintings were not originally associated with the idea of a homosexual minority that they came to signify for the Aesthetes. It is also worth noting that some positions on the matrix are logically impossible: where cultures do not conceptualize homosexuality as a separate identity, there can be no association of special crafts or skills with people erotically attracted to their own sex. Note, too, that some positions are possible but unstable. Homosexuality conceived as a relationship between normal and deviant persons defies divisions between insider and outsider imagery; Gauguin's paintings or Brassaï's photographs may have looked like an insider's documentation when they were created, even if they were later presented as an outsider's commentary. And the sailors' uniforms and black leather motorcycle jackets that cast "normal" American youths in homoerotic fantasies of physique magazines in the 1950s relied for their

Concepts of Homosexuality

Relationships of Art to Homosexuality

	Normal Part of Maturation	Encounter of One Normal/One Deviant	Separate Identity	Performative Role
Depictions				
a. by insiders	Greek Vessel paintings (Chapter 1)	Brassai's photographs (Chapter 4)	J.E.B.'s photographs (Chapter 6)	Tokugawa prints (Chapter 1) Della Grace's photographs (Chapter 7)
b. by outsiders	photographs of Sambia by anthropologists (Chapter 1)	Gauguin's paintings of Polynesian mahus (Chapter 1)	Northern Renaissance depictions of witches (Chapter 2)	Medieval Church carvings (Chapter 2)
Eroticized Objects	Sambia flutes (Chapter 1)	Sailors' uniforms and leather motorcycle gear (Chapter 5)	Props from Greek vase paintings in Aesthetic photography (Chapter 3 & 4)	Japanese harikata (Chapter 1)
Products of Sexual Minorities		Berdache Textiles (Chapter 1)	Harmony Hammond's Sculpture (Chapter 6)	

connotation of normality on their ability to signify heterosexuality in other contexts. All of the examples cited in the matrix are explored in more detail in the chapters that follow. Taken together, the histories they present demonstrate the complexity and variety of relationships between what we call art and what we call homosexuality.

The first two chapters of this book are devoted to affirming that complexity and variety of relationships between art and homosexuality. These two chapters are intended to destabilize assumptions about the naturalness or inevitability of our current notions about these issues and to serve as an introduction to the account that follows of the way modern conceptions about art and homosexuality developed together from the nineteenth to the twenty-first century. These latter chapters also challenge many commonly held assumptions. The story of the twinned birth and interrelated development of modern ideas about the artist and the homosexual does not unfold as a celebration of progress toward a goal of self-realization and freedom of expression. On the contrary, the familial relationship between the new ideas about art and about sexuality might be compared to that of fractious siblings: powerfully united by circumstance but often competitive and anxious to deny their association. The institutionalization of gay and lesbian identity into organizations seeking the political and social normalization of homosexuality, for instance, was often marked by disavowals of flamboyantly visual manifestations of minority sexual identity. At the same time, an examination of the history of modern art from the position of the history of homosexuality explodes myths of the avant-garde as either an arena of freewheeling inventiveness or a safe haven for misfits. On the contrary (again), the avant-garde often exploited homophobia to attract attention while energetically suppressing affirmative expressions of sexual deviance and policing the behaviors and beliefs of artists who aspired to its rewards. Groundbreaking visualizations of the physical and emotional bonds between people of the same sex, therefore, often originated outside the avant-garde in realms of popular culture before being appropriated as avant-garde spectacle.

Without idealizing the modern histories of either art or homosexuality, however, it would be churlish to deny that their confluence in the last 150 years or so has brought a vast amount of pleasure—both aesthetic and erotic—into the world. This book, therefore, also aims to celebrate the inventiveness that characterizes this extraordinary history, of which we are beneficiaries. Recognizing that genuine criticality (from the Greek term *kritikos*, the ability to judge) requires recognition of both accomplishment and failure, this book is motivated by the hope that readers interested in the relationship between art and homosexuality will be able to use evidence of history's fluidity as permission to be inventive, and turn accounts of past oppressions and suppressions toward generating the courage necessary to realize new ideals.

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CHAPTER 1

VARIETIES OF "HOMOSEXUALITY," VARIETIES OF "ART"

TO EXTEND OUR understanding of the variety of conceptual categories that might compete with modern Western definitions of "homosexuality" and "art," this chapter offers five historical case studies of configurations of art and sexual identity that challenge these commonly accepted norms. These examples are far from a comprehensive historical survey, which would require many volumes of text, so the absence of any particular culture from this study should not be taken to imply that it lacks a history of homoeroticism. And because the impulse of this chapter is to explore varieties of human conceptions and experience, it is important also to note that even the schema here risk homogenizing the topic by suggesting one-to-one correspondences between specific cultures and particular forms of homosexuality. In fact, for cultures from which historians have a wide range of evidence, various—often conflicting—sexual ideologies emerge. Historians of China, for instance, citing records that date back as far as the sixth century BCE, have documented instances, at one time or another, of almost all the conceptions of homosexuality included in the matrix in the introduction. Even when particular cultures at particular moments seem to provide unified conceptions of art and sexuality, this may reflect the paucity of evidence at early stages of study. Ultimately, this diversity is not surprising. If ten different researchers, all framing their own questions, asked ten different people in any community today about the meanings of sexuality or art, chances are that ten different accounts would emerge, each with its own standards of normality and value, and each claiming to be definitive.

Despite the risks of oversimplification, however, these case studies challenge common assumptions that modern Western conceptions of art and sexual identity are adequate to understand the global range of human cultures—or even the full history of what is meant by "the West." The opening section links Greco-Roman culture(s), conventionally imagined as the origin of Western civilization, with a people so distant in time and place that they might be taken to represent the opposite of this "West." Although their notions of art are indeed very different, their conceptions of sexuality reveal substantial parallels. This counterpoint of echo and opposition reminds us that comparative cultural studies require an open mind toward both similarities and differences. Just as "the Western tradition" of art and sexuality turns out to be far more diverse than is often asserted (as the rest of this book will show), elements of that tradition suggest surprising points of connection with cultures othered by a cohesive conception of "the West."

INITIATORY HOMOSEXUALITY: THE "SAMBIA" OF NEW GUINEA AND THE ANCIENT GREEKS AND ROMANS

In contrast to modern Western ideas of homosexuality as a minority identity, same-sex eroticism has been—and often remains—part of normal initiatory behavior in many other cultural contexts. Such practices are probably far more common than we will ever know. Western missionaries often prohibit behaviors that violate their moral codes, while historians and ethnographers sometimes overlook or suppress data that distress them or risk bringing censure on the peoples they study. As late as 1975, the American Anthropological Association passed a resolution (since repealed) withholding endorsement of any "anthropological research on homosexuality across national borders." Nevertheless, researchers have documented a wide range of such activities.

The institutionalization of homosexuality in customs marking the transition to adulthood has been most thoroughly studied in two very different cultures: the ancient Greeks and the "Sambia" of New Guinea (anthropologist Gilbert Herdt invented the name to protect the culture from homophobic interference). In both cases, practices that look to modern Western eyes like homosexual acts are incorporated in socially sanctioned mentoring relationships through which boys become men. (Analogous customs may exist among women in some cultures, but gender segregation and secrecy around such practices have made them inaccessible to mainly male historians and ethnographers.) Both the nature of these practices and their cultural meaning differ between the Greeks and the "Sambia," however, and the role of art in these cultures is very different too. Images were a primary form of expression—and hence of historical documentation—for the ancient world, but for the indigenous peoples of New Guinea, where the idea of illusionistic

representation is so foreign that anthropologists initially had to train locals to read photographs as representations rather than flat patterns, the material record of male initiation rites consists of crafted artifacts that are crucial to the ceremonies. The problems of applying modern Euro-American concepts of both "art" and "homosexuality" to cultures distant in time or place are clearly exemplified in these two case studies.

Among the Sambia, bamboo flutes are central to ceremonies that transform boys into men. Played during the ceremonies, they are also tipped into the initiants' mouths. In many indigenous Melanesian cultures, the transmission of semen from man to boy is believed to convey virility. Among some peoples, semen is smeared on the initiants' bodies, but in others—including the Sambia—it must be ingested orally, and the flutes are part of this practice. Made from freshly cut bamboo, the flutes range from one to three feet in length and vary in thickness and color according to the natural qualities of the bamboo. They are played in pairs, a short one with a long one. The smaller one is inserted into the larger before being placed on the lips of the boys undergoing initiation, and the boys suck the tip of the smaller flute to rehearse fellating their initiators. The flutes are burned and the boys draw strength from the warmth of the fire.

What might look like an obvious instance of "homosexual" behavior has quite complex meanings among the Sambia, for the smaller flute, although it symbolizes the tip of the penis, is considered female. A female spirit is believed to empower the sounds made by blowing on the flute, and the flute rituals are the first stage in a several-year initiation leading to marriage and fatherhood. These heterosexual connotations are open to a variety of interpretations, and, because of the way their practices challenge modern Western understandings of homosexuality as a minority identity explainable through biology or psychology, the Sambia have been much debated by scholars in a variety of fields. Citing the ubiquity of homosexual behaviors among the Sambia, some scholars argue that attitudes toward same-sex interactions are cultural products, like language, not usefully conceived as a form of individual orientation. Others, pointing to anthropologists' records that individual Sambian men experience the rituals with different degrees of pleasure, argue that concepts of individual sexual orientation retain cross-cultural validity. Without claiming to resolve this debate, it is enough to conclude that, by becoming a focus of modern arguments over the nature of sexuality, the Sambia of New Guinea have joined the classical Greeks and Romans as primary historical touchstones for these debates.

Like the Sambia, the ancient Greeks sanctioned a role for homosexual behavior between males of different ages. Many classical texts, including Plato's influential Socratic dialogues in the *Symposium*, attest to the Greeks' assumption that youths are erotically attractive to men. By the nineteenth century, these references worried teachers, who deleted them from popular translations, and inspired sexual reformers, who

justified modern forms of homosexuality by reference to Greek precedent. Although Greek philosophers were franker than their nineteenth-century counterparts about many aspects of the body, careful historical analysis suggests that their ideas had less in common with modern notions of sexuality than the Victorians either hoped or feared.

There is no denying that ancient Athenian culture valorized the beauty of young men and honored mentoring relationships between adult citizens and boys about to accede to citizenship, and that these relationships included activities we would define as sexual. Images have played a crucial role in historians' debates over these customs, for, as Foucault noted about the documentation of these practices, "the Greeks of the classical period showed more about them than they said: the vase paintings are infinitely more explicit than the texts that remain to us." The number and variety of ceramics decorated on these themes suggest the importance Athenian culture placed on these rituals of intergenerational courtship. Some vessels depict specific youths, naming them and attaching the adjective *kalos*, or "beautiful" (the same custom was applied to famous female prostitutes, but never to respectable women). Other vessels show men—represented as bearded and taller—wooing youths with gifts, usually a rooster or a stag, but sometimes simply a flower or piece of fruit. Another genre of imagery, sometimes combined with depictions of the wooing gift, shows men arousing boys by touching them on the chin and genitals; often the chin-chuck is reciprocated (Figure 1.1). Images also depict the erotic consummation of the relationship as frottage between the thighs, with the partners standing facing one another, often surrounded by dancing boys. Whether this was an artistic idealization or a depiction of actual practice is debated. Evidence that an adult Greek citizen had allowed his body to be penetrated was grounds for revoking citizenship rights, and was thus unlikely to be depicted on pottery designed to celebrate the boys' accession to mentored manhood. Although for one Athenian citizen to penetrate another was an almost unthinkable act of aggression, no such limitations characterized citizens' relationships to noncitizens, a category that included women, slaves, and foreigners. Images, confirmed by texts, again reveal a wide range of sexual practices in these contexts between and among both men and women, including orgies, cross-dressing, play with artificial phalluses, and the frolics of supernatural beings: gods, goddesses, nymphs, and satyrs.

Although the ancient Romans abandoned Athenian mentorship rituals, they sustained the fashion for erotic imagery. Both expensive silver goblets and their cheaper, mass-produced, ceramic derivatives depict sexual intercourse, often mixing hetero- and homosexual imagery on the same vessels. The so-called Warren cup (named for Edward Perry Warren, a pioneering early-twentieth-century collector of homoerotic artifacts) is a luxurious example. Each side of the cup bears a depiction of a male couple worked with great detail in expensive silver

Figure 1.1. Attic black figure cup (c. 520 BCE), ceramic, Museum of Fine Arts, Boston, gift of E. P. and Fiske Warren. Photograph © 2010, Museum of Fine Arts, Boston. The bearded, taller adult man here displays a conventional courtship gesture, fondling the genitals of a boy who reciprocates by touching his chin.

(Figure 1.2). In one, the hairstyle of the younger man marks him as a slave. In the other, the furnishings of the room—musical instruments for entertainment and a strap to support one partner's weight—may suggest a brothel. Texts document such businesses, and the remains of one house in the port city of Ostia have been analyzed as a male brothel due to the combination of graffiti boasting of sexual exploits between men and a mural showing Jupiter seducing the shepherd Ganymede by chucking him on the chin in the manner of Greek vase paintings.

Careful study of classical art and literature supports the thrust of David Halperin's argument (discussed in the introduction) that modern categories of "homosexual" and "heterosexual"—even the category "sex" itself—cannot be neatly mapped onto the ancient world. No Greek or Latin words match these modern concepts, and the initiatory customs that look sexual to us had religious or political meaning for the Greeks. Greeks and Romans divided what we would call sexuality into different conceptual categories, depending on the social status of those involved. A citizen's sexual penetration of a slave or a prostitute (male or female), for instance, though well within the realm of normal behavior, was conceptually very different from the initiation of

ruling-class men. Such activity provided amusing subject matter for both writers and artists. Depictions of such behaviors on dishware (mainly vessels for storing and drinking wine), designed to entertain and impress guests, demonstrate that ancient households did not share modern notions of privacy and propriety. The eroticized mentorship of citizens-in-training, on the other hand, was considered morally uplifting, even sacrosanct. Conventions for its depiction were far more dignified, making this kind of imagery appropriate to tombs.

Figure 1.2. Warren cup (1–20 CE), silver, British Museum, purchased with the aid of several members of the Greek and Roman Department's international group of supporters, the Caryatids, and the support of the Heritage Lottery Fund, the National Art Collections Fund, and The British Museum Friends. Photograph by Marie-Lan Nguyen.

While Victorians who tried to justify modern forms of homosexuality as "Greek love" erred in overlooking these fundamental cultural differences separating ancient and modern constructions of erotic experience, it is equally myopic to ignore aspects of ancient culture that seem to parallel modern ideas. Primary among these is the belief—well documented for the Romans and hinted at among the Greeks—that different individuals have different sexual preferences, and that some citizens, even emperors, willingly made themselves the penetrated sexual partners of other men. Visual evidence for this is scanty, the most compelling being an engraved agate gemstone, probably carved in Rome during the first century BCE. It shows two men engaged in anal intercourse with an inscription (in Greek) exhorting someone nicknamed "Leopard" to "drink, live in luxury, embrace! You must die, for time is short. May you live life to the full, O Greek!" The image, although very small, seems to depict sex between adult men, rather than between man and youth. As analyzed by art historian John R. Clarke, the transgressions of authoritative sexual norms of the period suggest that this gemstone was custom-made for a patron with deviant tastes. There is evidence that, by the time of the Roman empire, such men constituted a subculture, marked by distinctive modes of behavior and appearance. Effeminate gestures, lisping speech, pallor, depilation, and displays of makeup and brightly colored clothes signified sexual deviance in Roman texts, but so did the unkempt, shaggy look of some philosophers. In Roman texts, deviance from the visual norms of citizenship is often associated with deviance from its sexual norms, and characterized as a form of wickedness or disease, subject to mockery, disdain, and legal punishment. Classicists, such as Amy Richlin, have used such evidence to temper Halperin's polemical insistence that classical cultures bore *no* points of comparison to

modern sexual subcultures. There is some irony in the fact that familiar-sounding expressions of homophobia are the best evidence of a category analogous to modern homosexuality. Preserved texts mock or condemn deviant citizens, but in none do such men speak for themselves.

Just as classical culture seems to have anticipated modern homophobia, its treatment of female homoeroticism reveals deep roots for contemporary misogyny. In contrast to the abundance of evidence and scholarly attention devoted to male homoeroticism in classical Greece, sex between women in the ancient world is little understood. Although the modern terms *sapphist* and *lesbian* refer to Sappho of Lesbos, her life and poetry are known almost entirely through second- and thirdhand accounts. Extant examples of Sappho's poetry address various forms of love between men and women, between mothers and daughters, and between women, and her poetry was celebrated during her lifetime (approximately 612–558 BCE) without any reference being made to its erotic connotations. A century later, however, her name was associated with lascivious heterosexuality in at least six comic plays. By the first century BCE, commentators regularly invoked Sappho's homoeroticism, invariably to condemn it and often to belittle intellectual and artistic aspirations among women. What Sappho may best represent for the history of homosexuality is the first documented case of a woman's accomplishments so threatening men that she is pathologized as a deviant from proper gender norms, a pernicious strategy to discourage intellectually ambitious women who might be drawn to her example.

The problems that beset Sappho's history characterize the study of female homoeroticism in the premodern era in general. Few primary sources remain unmediated by the assumptions—usually misogynistic—of intervening translators, copyists, and commentators. This renders all the more precious the few stanzas of poetry and scraps of imagery that can be dated to the ancient world. But it is unclear to what extent these express women's experience or men's expectations. The relatively rare depictions of female homoeroticism on Greek pottery is a case in point, for there is no evidence that such vessels were ordered by women. Given men's patronage of pottery painters, scenes of apparently erotic touch, as women perfumed and depilated one another's pubic areas, have been interpreted as preparations for heterosexual contact (Figure 1.3). Though far from unambiguous, however, visual evidence—which is unmediated by translation and transcription, and detailed in a way that texts are not—offers unique insights into women's lives in the ancient world. Even if these images were designed for men to look at, the active poses and erect nipples and clitorises suggest a measure of erotic pleasure at odds with the official Greek views of women as passive objects of men's desire.

Figure 1.3. Apollodoros, decoration on a ceramic vessel (c. 515–495 BCE).

The most provocative visual evidence of an identity in the ancient world analogous to modern lesbianism comes in the form of a Roman funerary relief from the Augustan period (27 BCE–14 CE), which shows two women united in the clasped-hands pose given to married couples in tomb carvings. Although someone later cut the hair off the left figure, apparently to make her look like a man, the inscription records the names of two women. The implications of this image are ambiguous. The institution of marriage in ancient Rome underwent significant changes, with a wide variety of both legal and ceremonial manifestations—including ceremonies between members of the same sex—documented in the fragmentary, often contradictory written records of this era. What makes this sculpture so remarkable, however, is that it depicts a bond between women, who, because men were seen as the

proper possessors of both morality and property, are almost entirely excluded from the textual records.

Ancient Greco-Roman cultures, in sum, were marked by substantial variation in attitudes concerning what we would call sexuality, rendering them both like and unlike modern society. Although Greco-Roman practices of initiatory homosexuality have been closely studied since the Victorian era, recent analysis of the variety of ancient erotic practices suggests that the best lesson to draw from ancient texts and images is caution—caution about both our ability to know distant cultures through fragmentary records and the advisability of using such histories to justify or condemn modern beliefs and feelings.

GENDER-TRANSCENDENT HOMOSEXUALITY: POLYNESIA AND NORTH AMERICA

The role of homosexual acts in masculine initiatory behaviors—especially as it seems to characterize cultures, like the Sambia or the ancient Greeks, marked by strong gender divisions and assumptions of male superiority—leads some people to condemn male homosexuality as inherently misogynistic. But a second construction of homosexuality—one that is common among indigenous peoples of Asia and the Americas—challenges this generalization, for it valorizes the fluidity of boundaries between genders. From this perspective, what we might see as a homosexual couple is not *homo* (meaning "same") at all, because one of the partners has acceded to another gender—sometimes to the opposite gender in a binary system, but more often to an intermediary status that is neither male nor female, but combines the attributes of both.

Even within European history, conceptions of homosexuality as a form of gender transcendence have a long history. Examples of individuals who adopted the clothing, attributes, and mannerisms of the opposite sex abound within European history, and some of the scientists who first developed definitions of minority sexual identity in the late nineteenth century (discussed in chapter 3) stressed such cross-sex identifications and proposed ideas of sexes between or combining male and female. Nevertheless, the idea of gende transcendence seems counterintuitive to many Euro-Americans. Western cultures are strongly organized around binary notions of sex—think about how often the first question asked about babies is "Is it a boy or a girl?" and about how the answer structures our responses to every aspect of child-rearing right down to the color of diapers. Our languages insist on gender binaries—*he* vs. *she*, *him* vs. *her*—and lack terms for a third sex. *Transvestite* and *transsexual* are inadequate, for they imply accession to an opposite sex rather than a third category (these linguistic issues return in chapter 8). In the nineteenth century *bisexual* meant having attributes of both sexes, and many early sexologists used the term that way, but twentieth-century scientists redefined this term in ways that

reaffirmed both their paradigm of "homosexual" identity and the binary division of the sexes to designate people sexually attracted to both men and women. The *Oxford English Dictionary* gives 1914 as the first date at which the term was used this way, significantly in a medical dictionary.

As with initiatory homosexuality, because dominant Euro-American values conflict with gender-transcendent homosexuality, explorers, missionaries, and educators sought—often violently—to repress it, and much of the relevant evidence has been destroyed or suppressed. Nevertheless, and far more than initiatory homosexuality, gender-transcendent homosexuality remains a widespread global phenomenon, well documented in Brazil, Mexico, India, Tahiti, and among native North American populations. This currency opens gender-transcendent homosexuality to firsthand study, which shows that even within a single culture, such as the *hijras* of India (who begin as males but achieve intermediate sexual status), the practices and beliefs of individuals vary significantly from the ideals described in authoritative texts and from person to person. Such evidence of human variety should make us wary of generalizing too concretely about forms of sexuality for which—as with the Greeks—a limited number of records remain from the lives of a great many people. Studies of gender-transcendent homosexuality today also show how sexual norms change over time. Attitudes today differ from those even a generation ago, casting doubt on claims that any conception of sexuality is timeless and static.

A related implication of the persistence of gender-transcendent homosexuality is that it will not remain—if, indeed, it still is—outside common Euro-American notions of sexuality. Although counter to most notions of "gay" and "lesbian" identity, which are rooted in the biological sex of one's sexual partner(s) and, especially in the 1970s, often emphasized gender-appropriate affect (with macho gay men and earth-mother lesbians), ideas of gender between the binaries of masculine and feminine are central to postmodern "queer" sensibilities (discussed in chapter 8). At the same time, modern notions of identity politics—by which subordinate groups claim political representation, legal rights, and the self-expression afforded by film, literature, and the visual arts—have begun to inflect the attitudes of people in gender-transcendent communities, leading to more activist forms of identity. Far from being an anthropological curiosity, it may be that gender transcendence will be central to twenty-first-century constructions of sexuality. Indeed, recent advocates for "transgender" identities might be justified in citing the global and historical ubiquity of ideas about sexes between male and female to argue that many of the subjects commonly classed as "homosexual" (and treated under that rubric in this book) would be more accurately described as falling between or combining aspects of the sexes.

Without speculating too much about the future, however, it is clear that some aspects of gender-transcendent homosexuality accord with

modern Euro-American perceptions of sexual identity. Unlike initiatory homosexuality—which, because it is considered a normal, even necessary, part of growing up, confers no special identity on its participants—gender-transcendence implies a special identity. In cultures with large urban populations, such as India, researchers have argued that critical masses of people identifying as members of a third sex constitute "subcultures" or "communities" in some ways comparable to gay and lesbian subcultures. This identity includes distinctive modes of sensibility and behavior and, most pertinent to this study, often a particular relationship to art. Indigenous Tahitian and North American cultures demonstrate forms of gender-transcendent sexual identity with particular relevance to art.

When, in the 1890s, the artist Paul Gauguin (1848–1903) arrived in Tahiti, he was fascinated by the *mahu*, men who dressed as women and fulfilled feminine social roles. Such people, known by different names in different Polynesian cultures, are described in the accounts of explorers and missionaries from the eighteenth century onward. A 1799 missionary account from Tahiti is typical. The *mahu*s, it reports, "putting on the dress of a woman…follow the same employments, are under the same prohibitions with respect to food, etc., and seek the courtship of men as women do, nay are more jealous of the men who cohabit with them, and always refuse to sleep with women." More recent analysis of *mahu*s stresses their status as a third gender, distinct from both men and women. *Mahu* status is not always contingent on sexual attraction; some *mahu*s are said to be attracted to both men and women, while many abstain from sex altogether. Instead, *mahu*s are distinguished by their adoption of feminine dress, manners, and professions.

Figure 1.4. Paul Gauguin, *Marquesan Man in a Red Cape* (also called *Le Sorcier d'hiva o*) (1902), oil on canvas, Musée d'art moderne, Liège, Belgium. Photo credit: Erich Lessing/ Art Resource, NY. Beside this man in fantastic costume with a flower in his long hair, a colloquy between a fox and a bird—natural antagonists—underlines the theme of reconciliation of opposites.

The androgyny of the *mahu*s intrigued Gauguin, becoming a central—though, until Stephen Eisenman's recent study, unacknowledged—element of his famous images of Tahiti and the Marquesas Islands (Figure 1.4). Eisenman analyzes a pair of paintings showing the same androgynous Marquesan as depicting "the composite nature of the Polynesian *mahu*." Gauguin's famous twelve-foot-long painting titled *Where Do We Come From? What Are We? Where Are We Going?* is organized around a similar figure (Figure 1.5). In this painting, which Gauguin called "a philosophical work on a theme comparable to that of the gospel," the androgynous central figure reaches up to pluck the fruit from a tree. The figure's central position echoes that of the crucified Christ in traditional Christian iconography, while the gesture recalls Eve's plucking of the fruit of knowledge. The figure thus fuses not only

Figure 1.5. Paul Gauguin, *Where Do We Come From? What Are We? Where Are We Going?* (1897–1998), oil on canvas, Museum of Fine Arts, Boston, Tompkins Collection, Arthur Gordon Tompkins Fund. Photograph © 2010, Museum of Fine Arts, Boston.

masculine and feminine, but life and death. Gauguin's investment of androgyny with such symbolic meanings is also evident in his journals, which, published under the title *Noa Noa*, did at least as much as his paintings to create the Western belief in the idea of Tahiti as an island paradise. Both the genesis and the rhetoric of the journal are complex, for Gauguin collaborated with poet Charles Morice on various drafts. A passage presented as the moment of Gauguin's transition from corrupt European civilization to a primitive, natural state turns on the artist's response to Tahitian androgyny (Text 1.1). Gauguin here uses Polynesian androgyny to berate the rigidly defined gender roles of his native Europe, but at the same time he vilifies homosexuality as a product of European corruption. Even while advocating for more open-minded attitudes toward androgyny, however, Gauguin and Morice dropped this account

FROM *NOA NOA*, THE TAHITIAN JOURNALS OF PAUL GAUGUIN, WRITTEN IN COLLABORATION WITH CHARLES MORICE (PARIS: EDITIONS DE LA PLUME, 1901), 82–88 (TRANSLATED BY CHRISTOPHER REED)

In perpetual contact with pebbles, my feet have hardened and grown used to the ground. My body, almost constantly naked, no longer suffers from the sun.

Civilization leaves me little by little.

I begin to think simply, to feel just a little hatred for my neighbor—even better: to love him.

I have all the pleasures—animal and human—of a free life. I have escaped the artificial, the conventional, the customary. I enter into truth, into nature. . . .

A friend has come to me.

He came to me of his own accord, and I can here rest certain that he had, in coming to me, no base motive.

He is one of my neighbors, a very simple and handsome young man. . . .

In the evenings, when I rested from my day's work, we would talk. He would ask the questions of a curious young savage concerning European matters, particularly matters of love, and more than once his questions embarrassed me.

But his replies were even more naive than his questions. . . .

It happened that I needed, for one of my sculptural projects, a rosewood tree. I wanted a large solid trunk.

I consulted Jotéfa.

"One must go to the mountains," he told me. "I know a certain spot with several beautiful tress. If you want, I will take you. We will fell the tree that pleases you and carry it back the two of us."

We set out early in the morning. . . .

We went both of us naked, the white and blue *paréo* around our loins, hatchet in hand. . . .

And in this forest, in this solitude, in this silence were we two—he, a very young man, and I, almost an old man with a soul stripped of many illusions and a body tired from many efforts and from the long, fatal heritage of vices from a morally and physically corrupt society.

He walked before me, with the suppleness of an animal and the grace of an androgyne. And I believed I saw incarnated in him, palpitating and living, all the splendor of the flora around us. From it, in him, through him was loosed and emanated a powerful perfume of beauty.

Was this a man who walked there ahead of me? Was this the naive friend whose combined simplicity and complexity had attracted me? Was this not rather the Forest itself, the living Forest, without sex—and alluring?

Among peoples that go naked, as among animals, the difference between the sexes is much less marked than in our climates. Thanks to the artifices of our belts and corsets we have succeeded in making woman an artificial being, an anomaly that nature itself, subordinate to the laws of heredity, helps us, in this late stage of racial development, to confound and enervate, and whom we keep carefully in a state of nervous weakness and muscular inferiority, and in sparing her from fatigue, which is to say from the possibility of development. Thus modeled on a bizarre ideal of slenderness—which remains practically unknown among ourselves—our women no longer have anything in common with us, and this, perhaps, cannot be without grave moral and social disadvantages.

On Tahiti the air from the sea and the forest fortifies the lungs and broadens all shoulders and hips, and the rays of the sun and the gravel of the beaches spare no more the women than the men. Together they do the same work, with the same energy or the same indolence. Something virile is in the women and, in the men, something feminine. . . .

Man and woman, being comrades, being friends as much as lovers, are almost ceaselessly, in pain as in pleasure, together, and the very notion of vice is kept from them.

Why was it then, and by this very weakening of sexual difference, that in this drunkenness of lights and perfumes, all of a sudden arose in a civilized elder this horrible thought imbued with all the thrill of novelty and mystery?

[Here the following passage appears in Gauguin's draft, but was excised from the published version: "I had a sort of presentiment of crime, the desire for the unknown, the

awakening of evil. Then the weariness of the role of the male, who must always be strong, the protector, with heavy shoulders to support. To be for one minute the weak one who loves and obeys."*]

The fever throbbed in my temples and my knees weakened.

But the path stopped. To cross the brook my companion turned around, and, in this movement, turned his chest to me: the androgyne had disappeared. It was certainly a young man who walked ahead of me, and his calm eyes reflected the still clarity of the waters.

Peace immediately returned to me.

We stopped for a moment, and I felt an infinite joy, a joy of the spirit rather than of the senses, as I plunged into the fresh water of the brook.

"*Toë Toë* (it is cold)," Jotéfa said to me.

"Oh no!" I replied.

And this exclamation that, in my mind, corresponded to the conclusion of the battle I had just fought within myself against the perversion of an entire civilization. . . . And I said to myself that Nature had seen me fight, had heard me, had understood me: now she replied to my victory cry in her great voice that she was willing, after this trial, to welcome me among her children.

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* Many other changes mark the evolution of the drafts, in which this episode was among the most heavily revised. For the French text of the original draft, see Paul Gauguin, *Noa Noa*, ed. André Ballard (Paris: SPADEM, 1966), 28.

of the artist's conflicted admission of his momentary "Weariness of the role of the male" from their published version of his journal.

The canonic status of Gauguin's paintings and Greek vases puts images that challenge assumptions of heteronormativity at the center of art history's mainstream, although much art history—especially that associated with the "blockbuster" exhibitions that attract significant public and press attention—obfuscates these issues. Where the images on Greek vessels document how ancient culture pictured itself, however, Gauguin's paintings record an outsider's view of Polynesian society. His art and writing are informed by his own desires and by his sense of what other Europeans would benefit from seeing. This does not make them false, but it is important to understand Gauguin's highly symbolic works, not as records of the cultures he describes, but as evidence of the role played by perceptions of non-European cultures in generating Western ideas about sexuality.

Whatever the shortcomings—significant enough—of Gauguin's conflicted mysticism in his reaction to cultural norms that cast doubt on Western certainties about gender difference, he was far more open-minded than most Westerners meeting with manifestations of gender transcendence. Such encounters usually ended in comdemnation and

Figure 1.6. George Catlin, "Dance to the Berdash" (1844), as illustrated in *Letters and Notes on the Manners, Customs, and Conditions of North American Indians*.

violence. Sixteenth-century Spanish colonists justified their brutal enslavement of indigenous Americans by citing what they reported was common and open homosexual behavior (which they associated with their Arab enemies) among the natives. In the United States, the mid-nineteenth-century painter George Catlin, famed for his illustrated accounts of Native Americans, was among the first to describe for a general audience a native type that French explorers termed *berdashe* (or *berdache* in the modern spelling) (Figure 1.6). Among the Sioux, Sacs, and Fox, these explorers reported, *berdache*s dressed in women's clothes and interacted sexually with young men of their villages. Explaining his illustration of the annual "Dance to the Berdashe," performed by the men who have coupled with the *berdache*, Catlin's popular text resorted first to euphemism (the *berdache* "is driven to the most servile and degrading duties") and then dissolved into what readers could only have experienced as gibberish. The dance is performed, Catlin explained, by "such, and such only" of those "young men of the tribe" who can "publicly make their boast (without the denial of the Berdashe), that Ahg-whi-ee-choos-cum-me-hi-anh-dwax-cumme-ke on-daig-nun-ehow ixt. Che-ne-a'hkt ah-pex-ian I coo-coo-a wi-an-gurotst whow-itcht-ne-axt-ar-rah, ne-axt-gun-he h'dow-k's dow-on-daig-o-ewhicht nun-go-was-see." All that was clear was that he disapproved. Catlin concluded this section: "This is one of the most unaccountable and disgusting customs, that I have ever met in the Indian country. . . . For further account of it I am constrained to refer the reader to the country where it is practiced, and where I should wish that it might be extinguished before it be more fully recorded." Such deeply ingrained prejudices inflect all Euro-American accounts of Native American sexuality. Even the term *berdache*, although it is standard in the anthropological and ethnographic literature, is suspect, being a product of this history. Used by the French as a euphemism for male prostitutes, the term derives from the Arabic *bardaj*,

meaning a male slave who is scorned for submitting to his master's sexual domination.

The term's pejorative roots contrast with Native American respect for individuals who transcend gender boundaries. Cumulative research documents the presence of male-born *berdache*s in nearly 150 North American native peoples from Alaska to Florida, each with its own word for the status. Of these cultures, many (estimates range from a third to half) also feature female-born *berdache*s, sometimes designated by the same word, sometimes given their own term. Among some native peoples, investigators reported, *berdache*s switched genders in a two-gender system, in which case they interacted sexually only with members of the "opposite" sex. Among the Mohaves, it is reported that *alyha* (born as boys) went so far as to imitate menstruation (by scratching themselves until they bled) and pregnancy (including full ceremonial burial of a "dead child" made of fecal matter). *Hwame* (born as girls), meanwhile, ignored their menses and followed the rituals required of men when their wives menstruated or were pregnant. Such extremes in adherence to binary models of gender are rare among Native Americans, however, leading some researchers to conclude that these accounts of the Mohave were influenced or misreported by observers. More typically, *berdache*s acceded to an intermediary status between the sexes, marked by its own style of dress and behavior, usually—but not always—including activity we might describe as homosexual. Like the Tahitian *mahu*s, but unlike modern Western notions of homosexual identity, *berdache* status was not premised on erotic attraction, but on a subject's inclination toward the full range of activities and attitudes associated with the opposite sex.

What remains consistent across various Native American cultures—and what was most incomprehensible to Euro-American investigators—is that *berdache* identity, far from being stigmatized, conferred privileged status on individuals. The *berdache*s' interstitial position was believed to give them special spiritual powers and make them ideal intermediaries in disputes and debates. Even Catlin had to acknowledge that the *berdache* "is looked upon as medicine and sacred." Two hundred years earlier the Jesuit explorer Jacques Marquette had marveled, "They are summoned to the Councils, and nothing can be decided without their advice. . . . Through their profession of leading an Extraordinary life, they pass for Manitous,—That is to say, for Spirits,—or persons of Consequence." To this day, some Native American cultures preserve a privileged status for gender transcendence. The Night Way ceremony among the Navajos, for instance, incorporates men who dress and perform as women in the dancing (Figure 1.7).

Visual records like Navajo weavings, Catlin's illustration—or, more notoriously, engravings of forty *berdache*s being ripped apart by dogs on the order of the Spanish explorer Vasco Balboa in Panama in 1513—are important to documenting this aspect of the history of sexuality. This history intersects with art history more fundamentally, however, because

Figure 1.7. Yei dancers (c. 1920), woven textile, Heard Museum, Phoenix, Arizona. Figurative weavings like this one document aspects of Navajo culture, although they were generally created for markets outside the community. Although it would not be obvious to outsiders, these figures are believed to depict men performing women's roles in the dances for the Night Way ceremony.

in many Native cultures, male-born *berdache*s were seen as compelled to transcend their gender by their extraordinary talents in weaving and pottery, crafts often practiced by women (by the same token, *berdache*s born as girls were often renowned as extraordinarily brave warriors). Among the late-nineteenth-century Zuni, for instance, We'wha (1849–1896) was renowned as both a weaver and a potter (Figure 1.8). Exemplifying the *berdache*'s traditional function as mediator, he befriended the anthropologist Matilda Stevenson—one of the first women in this profession—and traveled to Washington in 1885, where he contributed to early efforts to document Native American arts by demonstrating weaving processes for the camera.

The early-twentieth-century Navajo *berdache* Hastíín Klah (1867–1937) fused the masculine religious practices of chanting and sandpainting with the feminine occupation of weaving. Klah recorded in the medium of woven wool Navajo religious imagery previously deployed only in evanescent media, especially sandpainting, documenting these practices at the same time that he revolutionized the look of Navajo textiles (Figure 1.9). Again the *berdache*'s intermediary status is relevant, as Klah mediated not only between masculine and feminine traditions but between his indigenous population and white anthropologists under the

Figure 1.8. Photograph of We'wha weaving (c.1886). Photo credit: National Anthropological Archives, Smithsonian Institution.

direction of philanthropist Mary Cabot Wheelwright. His weavings, along with drawings of Navajo religious iconography made by Klah or under his supervision, were created for specialists and museums. Such boundary breaking was controversial, and some still criticize Klah's translation of ephemeral images to permanent media and his willingness to share sacred practices with outsiders. Klah's defenders argue, however, that his mediations played a crucial role in helping the Navajo adapt from a dispersed, nomadic way of life to become the largest—and one of the most coherent—native nations in North America, identified with both a rich religious heritage and a tradition of craftsmanship in textiles and pottery.

Unlike such names as Leonardo and Michelangelo, Whe'wa and Klah are not famously associated with either art or homosexuality, for their lives and work do not fit neatly into those concepts as they exist today. Native American visual culture was long perceived less as "art" than as a timeless and homogenous form of "craft," precluding recognition of even substantial creative innovation, while Zuni and Navajo beliefs in gender identities beyond the binary of male and female were both actively suppressed and unwittingly misunderstood by colonizing cultures. Nevertheless, as individuals who experienced nonnormative sexuality as conferring special sensibilities for the production of beautiful objects, Whe'wa and Klah may have more in common with modern notions of the homosexual as aesthete than do their more famous Renaissance counterparts. The validity of such historical comparisons rests in the eye of the beholder, however, for—like Gauguin's invocation of the Tahitian *mahu*—the links are forged in the interests of the perceiving culture. As we change, our sense of what is historically relevant shifts too. Early advocates of homosexuality saw Leonardo and Michelangelo as larger-than-life reflections of themselves: individual geniuses, struggling to create forms of beauty that would demand the respect of even hostile audiences. A more recent generation of scholars has drawn attention to the histories of Whe'wa and Klah because of their position in societies that valued the skills and perceptions of people who fall between the poles of masculinity and femininity.

PERFORMATIVE HOMOSEXUALITY: TOKUGAWA JAPAN

As with other European encounters with foreign sexual norms, early visitors to Japan were astonished by what they found. The sixteenth-century missionary Francis Xavier (later sainted) complained of homosexual

Figure 1.9. Hastíín Klah, "Whirling Logs—Night Chant" (c. 1920), woven textile, Heard Museum, Phoenix, Arizona. The Nightway chant, with which the Whirling Logs story is most often associated, is a healing ceremony that takes place over nine days. The Whirling Logs chant recounts the story of a river journey, made in a hollowed-out log, during which the hero has many challenges and learns lessons associated with farming and healing. In the traditional iteration of these symbols as sandpainting, the image created by the singer would be destroyed before dawn

acts practiced without shame in Zen monasteries and among the *samurai* knights. Over a century later, the published account of a Dutch mission to Japan condemned the open solicitation of customers by male prostitutes on city streets, a practice made all the more shocking when the dignified official escorting the delegation detained the group for half an hour to take advantage of the offerings. Two aspects of this episode typify conceptions of sexuality—including homosexuality—during the Tokugawa period (1603–1868): the acceptance of casual sexual relationships and their mediation through the newly developed cash economy. Before the Tokugawa era, homosexuality among men was associated with all-male monasteries and military communities of *samurai*. Both monks and knights adopted adolescent *nyake* (the term, written by combining the characters for "youth" and "spirit," came also to mean "anus"), whom they mentored in structures analogous to Greek relationships. These relationships were documented in monastic and governmental records, and also became the basis of ribald fictions, such as the *Chigo no soshi* (Acolyte scroll), which narrates a series of sexual intrigues between a priest, his *nyake*, and the *nyake*'s manservant (Figure 1.10). Such relationships were ongoing and, especially among the *samurai*, often conceived as a permanent bond, influencing the distribution of titles, wealth, and land.

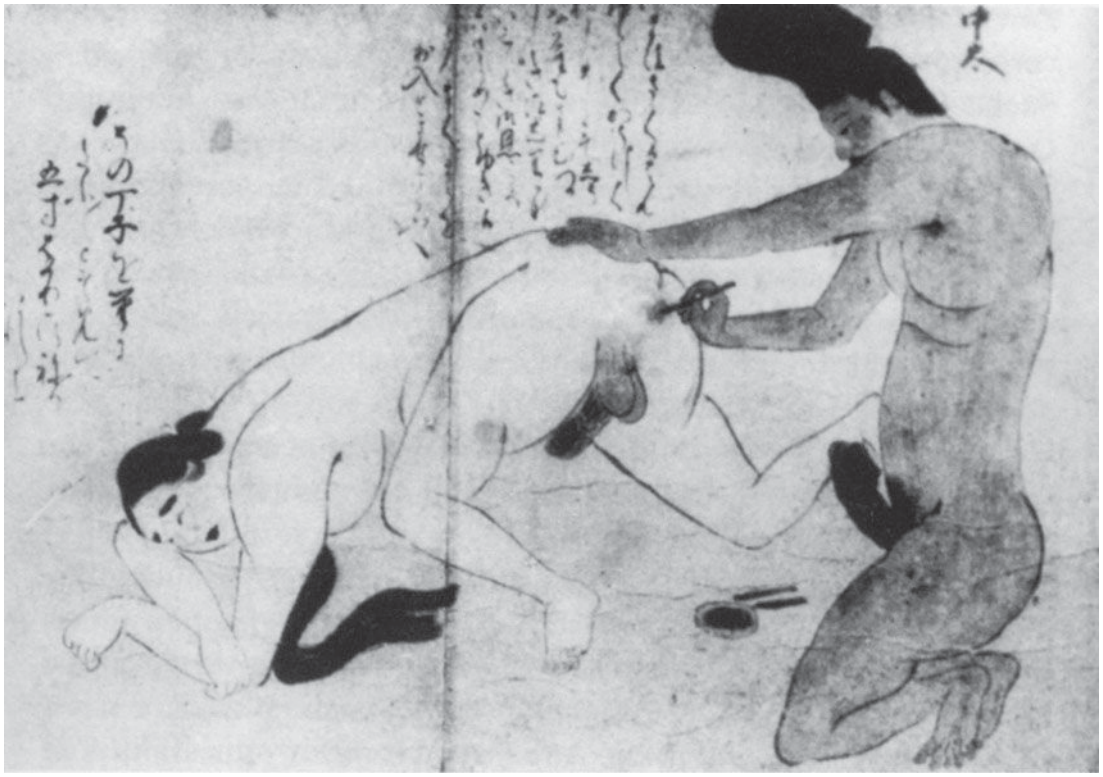

Figure 1.10. *Chigo no soshi* (Acolyte scroll) (1321), Sanpoin Temple.

No such expectations of long-term tutelage or devotion animated Tokugawa sexuality. The Tokugawa era saw the collapse of feudalism as 200 warring baronies were consolidated under a central government and armies of rural *samurai* became urban administrators if they were employed at all. The central government rigorously enforced its political authority, but—perhaps as a way of defusing resistance—accepted a wide range of commercial enterprises, including vast and variegated markets for pornography and prostitution. On the outskirts of cities, the *ukiyo,* or "floating world"—from a Buddhist term signifying the transience of material pleasures—combined fashion and eroticism in its networks of brothels, teahouses, and theaters.

Like today's sex industry in its relationship to pornography, the floating world generated a large body of images (*ukiyo-e*) and narratives (*ukiyo-zoshi*), which record, not the floating world itself, but the fantasies it offered its clients. Their complicated scenarios reflected the highly developed possibilities of Tokugawa commercial sex. Not all *ukiyo-e* are erotic. Many depict famous actors; others show distant sites, which were as tantalizing as exotic sex to customers in a society with strict restrictions on travel. Western scholars have often emphasized these nonsexual categories of *ukiyo-e*, evading the identities of courtesans and cross-dressers, and ignoring the explicit depictions of sex (called *shunga,* or "springtime images"). Tokugawa Japanese did not, however, isolate a

distinct category of pornography, and even the most famous *ukiyo-e* artists worked across these genres. Only in the eighteenth century were laws passed against images "detrimental to public morality," but the continued production of erotic prints suggests that these vague restrictions were laxly enforced compared to restrictions on political and religious imagery.

Homosexuality was not distinguished morally or conceptually from heterosexuality in the *shunga* of the floating world, or in Tokugawa Japan as a whole. The libido—termed *iro*, or "color"—was seen as a volatile force that could infuse a wide range of relationships. In Tokugawa texts, both fictional and historical, *iro* disrupts conventional social hierarchies, with love-struck commoners wooing aristocrats and masters seduced by servants. Though some texts acknowledge that certain men spurn either men or women as sexual partners, or that certain women refuse men, such attitudes are presented as eccentric inhibitions of desires that are naturally promiscuous. This fluidity in the construction of Tokugawa commercial sex was matched by widespread perceptions that the population as a whole was growing more androgynous and by acceptance of homosexual liaisons outside the floating world. Tokugawa sources do reflect certain limiting assumptions about homosexuality: oral sex between men was taboo, and there was an assumption that the "man" would penetrate the "youth," even when the ages involved were quite close or the age hierarchy conflicted with class status. In the floating world, though, even the latter assumption was somewhat fluid, for "youth" status was less about age than about styles of hair and dress, and could be performed by men long past adolescence. In deference to the identification of male prostitutes as "youths," their brothels were known colloquially as *kodomo-ya*, or "children's houses."

Parallels between the floating world and commercialized sex cultures in modern urban centers suggest a symbiosis between free markets and performative notions of sexual identity that emphasize the fluidity of desire. The floating world offered a vast range of short-term pleasures, including hetero- and homosexual encounters, as well as sex with the ambiguously gendered actors who performed female roles in the *kabuki* theaters. The pornography of the period, likewise, appealed to a wide variety of tastes. A print by Suzuki Harunobu (1725–70), for instance, illustrates a story that combines hetero- and homosexuality with cross-dressing (Figure 1.11). Such prints seem less to presage modern "gay" imagery (conceived as an exclusive attraction to one's own sex) than postmodern "queer" sexuality, with its emphasis on the fluidity of desire and its delight in performances of gender transgression (as discussed in chapter 8).

Because of the emphasis on androgyny and cross-dressing, the sex of figures in *ukiyo-e* is often ambiguous. Accounts of the floating world describe brothels where men impersonated beautiful women and where women dressed as men—even impersonating *samurai* by traveling in

Figure 1.11. Suzuki Harunobu, woodblock print. In the tale depicted, a man who discovers his mistress in bed with an actor cross-dressed as another woman joins the couple to make a threesome.

gangs and roughing up passersby with the flat sides of their swords. Because Western viewers, willfully or unwittingly, overlooked this emphasis on role playing, *ukiyo-e* were often misinterpreted. Unless figures are identified in accompanying texts or—as in the *shunga*—genitalia are portrayed, it is difficult or impossible to be sure of the genders of the depicted figures. This is especially true for the figures art historians call "courtesans," but can also be true of the clients. Among the stories told and illustrated in the eighteenth-century *Seken musume katagi* (Characters of Worldly Young Women) is one of a woman who patronizes an all-female brothel cross-dressed as a soldier.

Representations of lesbianism—whether in Tokugawa prints or texts—must be analyzed with caution, for most were authored by men and all were probably intended primarily for male consumers. Lesbian themes are rare, but present, in Tokugawa erotic literature. One story tells of a woman who hired courtesans for herself out of jealousy for her adventurous husband. *Ukiyo-e* occasionally depict sex between women. A clever print by the renowned Katsushika Hokusai (1760–1849) uses the binding of the book to separate a female couple from a female eavesdropper who masturbates to the sound of the other women's lovemaking (Figure 1.12).

Visual evidence concerning Tokugawa sexuality is not confined to images. Both Hokusai and Utamaro (1753–1806)—two of the most famous *ukiyo-e* artists—produced depictions of women using dildos,

Figure 1.12. Katsushika Hokusai, illustration for *Manpuku Wago-jin* (1821), woodblock print.

which themselves have become collectors' items. Made from wood, ivory, or the horns of water buffalo, these could have one head or two, the latter allowing both women to be penetrated simultaneously. While stories and images from the floating world show single-headed models being used for masturbation (in heterosexual encounters as well as in sex between women), the specificity of the two-headed *taigaigata* for female couples is indicated by its written character, which combines two "woman" symbols.

It seems significant that one of the most interesting depictions of a *taigaigata* in action is also one of the few *ukiyo-e* that may be an exception to the rule of male authorship. Scholars debate whether this image of two abalone divers making love on a beach was designed by Hokusai's daughter, Katsushika Oei (active 1818–54), or authored by a man imitating her distinctive style (Figure 1.13). In either case, the image's association with female authorship deepens the ambiguity of its meanings. On one hand, the vaginal shape of the open abalone in the basket and on the ground near the figures suggests an all-female environment appropriate to a celebration of sex between women. On the other hand, scenes of female abalone divers, who worked almost naked, were staples of erotic imagery devised for male viewers. Nor is the issue resolved by turning to the artist's life. Little is known about Oei, other than that she

Figure 1.13. Attributed to Katsushika Oei, *Abalone Divers*, woodblock print. This print has also been attributed to male designers Yanagawa Shigenobu and Keisei Eisen working in Katsushika Oei's style. It depicts women using a *taigaigata*.

and her sister trained with their father and achieved considerable fame in the late Tokugawa era, when the novelty of women artists was briefly fashionable. Oei married another artist, but divorced him to return to work in her father's studio, collaborating with him and other male artists and poets in his circle. Rejecting conventional standards of femininity, Oei reportedly drank and smoked like a man. Her aversion to housework was such that she and her father were said to change houses rather than clean them. Oei's best-known prints appeared in a handbook for women, illustrating topics from marriage and childbirth to makeup tips and musicianship. Aspects of Oei's life—her adoption of masculine habits and interest in educating other women—suggest attributes of modern lesbian identity, but fall short of definitive association with the sexual practices or forms of community that identity implies. Ultimately, it may be that the most concrete evidence of sex between women in Tokugawa Japan remains neither images nor biographies. These two most conventional bases of art history fade in usefulness compared to the *taigaigata* themselves: material evidence of the attention lavished on sexual encounters between women. One of Hokusai's prints, made to advertise shops for sex toys, shows a *taigaigata* displayed on a special stand (Figure 1.14). This emphasis on display, however, reminds us that Tokugawa investments in fantasy and performance preclude generalizations about

Figure 1.14. Katsushika Hokusai, illustration of a *taigaigata*, woodblock print. The text reads "Isle of Women Double Dildo."

anything like what we take to be the core personal identities associated with sexuality.

Like Sambia flutes, *taigaigata* constitute a rarely acknowledged aspect of this visual history of sexuality, both so far outside modern Western ideals for either art or sexuality that they remain almost completely unanalyzed and are not exhibited in museums of either "art" or ethnography. Scholars who push beyond the boundaries of modern definitions of "art" to study a broader range of visual culture emphasize how this wider focus decenters the "West," but such studies have, to date, remained generally focused on modernism (and its corollary, postmodernism) and the mass media. Someday, perhaps, it will be possible to synthesize new scholarship on objects into a history that integrates their visual, tactile, and aesthetic elements into a material history of human sexuality. For now, the most salutary function of an integrated history of art and homosexuality may be to reveal the blind spots in dominant practices of knowledge production and dissemination. Acknowledging the cultural boundaries that define conceptions of art and sexuality often assumed to be universal and natural is a vital prerequisite for appreciating the richness of the histories sketched in the following chapters.

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CHAPTER 2

BEFORE MODERNISM

THIS CHAPTER BEGINS where the previous chapter's case study concerning ancient Greece and Rome left off, developing in more detail the point that the history of "Western" ideas about art and sexuality cannot be assumed to be about continuity and evolution. The survey offered here might be described as navigating the familiar waters of art history's mainstream—from medieval to Renaissance, baroque, and neoclassical painting and sculpture—but steering against the currents of both art-historical conventions and common knowledge. Medieval and especially Renaissance art became so important to later Euro-American culture that they can look misleadingly familiar. Reproductions and derivations of this art created the visual fabric of everyday experience in Europe and America through most of the nineteenth and twentieth centuries, making it easy for scholars and the general public alike to overlook how different from the modern world were medieval and Renaissance cultures. Modern beliefs about individual self-expression gave rise to popular stories of great Renaissance artists confidently overcoming adversity to achieve aesthetic perfection, obscuring the ways these artists embody the distinctive contradictions and inconsistencies of their eras. Instead of seeking out elements of the modern in ever-earlier eras or tracing an evolution of styles through a series of famous names, this chapter presents well-known artists and art works as fragments of a history that acknowledges the diversity of beliefs about both art and sexuality within what is often misleadingly called "the" Western tradition.

EARLY CHRISTIAN AND MEDIEVAL EUROPE

The Roman emperor Constantine's conversion to Christianity in 337 had enormous consequences for European history, not least among them the establishment of the Bible as the basis for rules governing both art and sexuality. Under Constantine's sons, Constans and Constantius (the former, ironically, notorious for his sexual interest in captured enemy soldiers), new laws restricting male homosexuality were passed. Historians debate the exact scope and application of these laws and similar biblically derived rules against sex with menstruating women, shaving, and the creation of idols. Their consensus, however, is that, in contrast to the pantheistic Romans, early Christians condemned a wide range of sensual and aesthetic indulgence, which they associated with pagan rituals and classed as forms of heresy. Although these practices were vehemently attacked by churchmen and proscribed by violently punitive laws, the effect of legal theory on popular custom is unclear. Frequent sermons reiterating the need for such laws raise questions about their effectiveness in controlling behavior, although they undoubtedly played a role in asserting the righteousness of the ecclesiastical and governmental authorities who proclaimed them.

Visual sources contribute to historians' debates about homoeroticism in the early Christian era, although their meanings are at least as ambiguous as textual records. In his pioneering *Same-Sex Unions in Premodern Europe* (1994), historian John Boswell analyzed an image from a twelfth-century history book that depicts the ninth-century union of two men, presided over by a priest and followed by a banquet in the couple's honor (Figure 2.1). Although this might look to modern eyes like clear evidence of gay marriage, that interpretation is accurate only with the acknowledgment that "marriage" was a very different institution from what the term implies today. Before the thirteenth century, marriage was not seen as important enough to warrant standard ecclesiastical norms or procedures. Until this time (and in some parts of Europe, for centuries afterward), marriages did not require church blessing, cohabitation and divorce were common, and some men—even saints—had several wives at once. Marriage was not based on romantic feelings, and most theologians argued that sex was not necessary to marriage; Christ's parents were a case in point. Instead, marriage, especially when contracted among people with property, implied financial obligations between families.

With this historical understanding of marriage in mind, it seems accurate to say that the men depicted in the medieval book—the Byzantine emperor Basil I and the scion of a wealthy Greek family—were married. Historians recorded, without imputation of impropriety, that Basil was entreated with gifts from the young man's widowed mother to form an alliance with her family; that he maintained a close relationship with the son because of the ceremony; that the mother later gave significant

property to her son and Basil together; and that, outliving them both, the mother bequeathed her estate to Basil's son, the emperor Leo, although she had at least one biological grandchild. Yet this union was only one of many officially sanctioned bonds with both men and women that marked Basil's career. (We know nothing of his Greek partner's other ties, since he—not being an emperor—left fewer records.) In his early life, Basil married a woman. Also in his youth, when he was a penniless—though, by all accounts, handsome—immigrant to the Byzantine capital, Constantinople, he contracted a church-blessed relationship with a monk or cleric, who is mentioned by historians only because his brother introduced Basil to the imperial court, where he rose from groom to emperor. Basil came to power when he was named co-ruler by the reigning emperor, Michael III, who, though Basil was older, adopted him as his son and had him divorce his wife in order to marry an imperial mistress. A year later Basil orchestrated Michael's assassination, ruling alone for almost twenty years. Historians debate the matriliny of Basil's two male heirs, dividing their opinions among his two wives and the emperor Michael's sister, a former nun who became Basil's publicly acknowledged mistress.

Perhaps the only thing this ninth-century saga demonstrates conclusively is that premodern marital norms were complicated and remain poorly understood. Church-blessed same-sex unions seem to have been relatively common, for archives of Byzantine and early medieval church documents hold numerous blessings and even sacraments for them, many comparable to marriage rites of the era. These ceremonies grew more complex and liturgical through the twelfth century, coinciding with the popularity of secular stories and ballads celebrating the bonds between

Figure 2.1. Illustration in the "Madrid Skylitzes," a history of the Byzantine empire by Ioannis [John] Skylitzes (twelfth century), Biblioteca Nacional de España, Madrid. On the right of this image, a priest in a church before an open gospel blesses the union of Basil and John, while John's mother looks on; on the left, she hosts a meal for the couple.

knights. Church teachings prohibiting sex between men, as measured by the penances prescribed, treated these sins much like illicit heterosexual activity. The term *sodomy* described nonprocreative sex, whether between men or heterosexual. Even procreative sex was seen as a necessary evil, with only celibacy accounted truly virtuous. At the same time, activities that would likely seem sexual to modern culture formed part of religious worship. For example, male worshippers gathered naked, both in street processions celebrating St. Francis's renunciation of property and in church for ritualized penances where they were whipped.

Various images reflect these theological ideas, among them the carvings on medieval churches, which depict sex between men among other sins to be avoided. Relegated to marginal positions—the capitals of pillars and, especially, the corbels supporting the eaves on church exteriors—these figures expose their often-oversized genitals among other scenes of idolatrous or licentious activity. The pillars of the Romanesque church at Châteaumeillant in central France, for instance, boast one capital showing a female representation of lust attacked by snakes near another featuring bearded men kissing and fondling one another, one with a visible erection, all under the inscription "Hac rusticani mixti" ("these peasants have been mingled"—a common euphemism for sexual intercourse, but also an expression that suggests being mixed up). Similar illustrations appear in manuscripts documenting accusations by the French king, Philip IV, against the monastic Order of the Temple, known as the Templars. In 1306 Philip had the Templars arrested for idolatry and heresy, including homoerotic initiation rites (Figure 2.2). His confiscation of their property erased his significant debts to the monks, however, so this

Figure 2.2. Marginal illustration in Jacques de Longuyon, *Les Voeux du Paon* (The peacock's vows) (c. 1305), Pierpont Morgan Library, New York. One of Philip IV's claims against the Templars was that the knights (distinguished here by the high hat) in their initiation rites kissed the buttocks and genitals of monks (indicated by the tonsured hair).

Figure 2.3. *The Temptation of Adam, Eve,* west façade, Cathedral of Notre Dame, Paris (nineteenth-century recreation of thirteenth-century sculpture). © Sylvie Allouche/ Credit: The Bridgeman Art Library International. This depiction of Adam and Eve, defaced during the French Revolution, is located in a prominent position supporting the sculpture of the Virgin that stands between the central doors of the cathedral. The iconography of the female snake originated in the thirteenth century.

episode may be a pioneering example of politicians exploiting homophobia for their own gain. Far more common than medieval images of men in carnal embrace was the motif, new in the thirteenth century, of a female-headed serpent in the Garden of Eden (Figure 2.3). The serpent—sometimes identified as Lilith, a demon or spirit from Mesopotamian myth who was Adam's first wife in Judaic lore—tempts Eve with the fruit of sexual knowledge. Medieval commentators linked this story, not to desire between women, however, but to erotic temptation in general.

Contemporary with these ecclesiastical images, the often-illustrated poems of the Italian poet Dante Alighieri set homosexual acts among other common sins. His *Purgatorio* assigned sodomites, along with others guilty of lust, to the most benign level of purgatory (Canto 26), just outside the gates of heaven; in Dante's *Inferno*, sodomites share a middle circle of hell with those who flout biblical injunctions against blasphemy and lending money at interest (Cantos 14–15). Dante reflects his era's association of same-sex eroticism with the new class of urban intellectuals, naming his own teacher among the sodomites along with other

Figure 2.4. Illustration of Dante's *Inferno* (c. 1420), attributed to Bartolomeo di Fruosino (1366–1441), Bibliothèque Nationale de France, Paris. The image shows Virgil and Dante with the sodomites on burning sand in hell, and the text describes Dante respectfully greeting his teacher Brunetto Latini. The high professions of the other sodomites are symbolized by their headgear.

clerics and scholars (Figure 2.4). Dante's decision to write in Italian, rather than Latin, suggests that his poems reflect secular attitudes rather than official church teachings.

THE RENAISSANCE

During the late Middle Ages, efforts to police homosexuality increased, provoked less by the church than by city governments, which grew in power during this period, competing with religious institutions for authority. Some churches continued to sanction unions between men; the essayist Michel de Montaigne records a group of approximately thirty Portuguese men solemnizing their unions in a church in Rome in 1578. Secular texts, however, show legal repression grew more common and more severe during the Renaissance. Dante called sodomy "the vice of Florence," and by the late fifteenth century a quarter of Florentine men—hundreds every year—were arrested, often repeatedly, for homosexual activity before reaching the marriageable age of thirty. In Venice, too, fifteenth-century legal records document arrests and executions of sizable groups of men, as well as efforts to close down meeting places associated with sex between men. Montaigne's report of the men who married one another concludes by noting that some of them were later arrested and burned. He also records the hanging, in 1580, of a French woman who, masquerading as a man, married another woman.

The implications of these facts are debatable. The Venetian authorities' vehemence in persecuting homosexuality has been analyzed as a response to the seaport city's reputation for heterosexual prostitution and as a gambit in the government's competition with the clergy, who were repeatedly cited for instigating sodomy, though they were exempt from legal prosecution. In Florence, however, it was churchmen who claimed moral prestige by condemning sexual vice. As early as 1305, one

cleric complained that all Florentine citizens indulged in sodomy. Almost two hundred years later the influential preacher Girolamo Savonarola was exhorting other churchmen in Florence to renounce their concubines and "beardless youths." Under Savonarola's influence, punishments for sodomy increased in severity in Florence, but his public execution for heresy in 1498 was followed by a general pardon.

However distressing the shifting legal status of homosexual behaviors must have been for the people prosecuted, this heightened scrutiny benefits historians, for activities that went unremarked in earlier eras were now recorded in both legal documents and casual innuendo. In Florence, allegations of sodomy (like other crimes) could be made anonymously by anyone literate enough to drop a note into a drum provided for that purpose outside the Palazzo Vecchio, so the threat of prosecution—justified or not—hung constantly over citizens' dealings with one another. In practice, however, charges did not always lead to prosecution, and convictions usually resulted in fines, except during the period of Savonarola's greatest influence, when—perhaps because of the new severity of the consequences—anonymous accusations of sodomy declined drastically. In Venice, on the other hand, sentences of mutilation and death were regularly applied to those convicted of both hetero- and homosexual sodomy, though most of the cases involved only men (in contrast, heterosexual rape was punished with relatively short prison terms). The textual records generated by these trials suggest that sex between men at this period was commonly age-stratified, with the youth assumed to take the receptive role. Such stratification mirrored norms for marriage at a time when men wedded women half their age.

These records suggest that sexual behavior in Renaissance Italy was not seen as a basis for individual identity. When preachers fulminated against sodomites as a group, their hyperbolic claims about the seriousness of the problem cast sodomy as a ubiquitous form of youthful delinquency, rather than a characteristic of an identifiable minority. Their ongoing recourse to such rhetoric also suggests that sermons did little to change behavior. The absence of modern notions of homosexual identity in the fifteenth century should not be surprising, however, for modern ideas of individual identity in general postdate the Renaissance. This is reflected in the history of art, as well. Before the Renaissance, painting and sculpture were not conceived as expressions of individual artists. The medieval manuscript illuminators and sculptors whose work is illustrated in this chapter were allied with other kinds of craftsmen who carried out, anonymously and often collaboratively, commissions dictated by their patrons.

If modern ideas of sexual identity and artistic self-expression cannot be simply mapped onto the Renaissance, however, it is nevertheless true that these notions have Renaissance roots. During the Renaissance, a relatively small number of wealthy urbanites began to distinguish themselves from the masses—and from one another—by their education and

Figure 2.5. Donatello, *David* (c. 1453), bronze, Museo Nazionale del Bargello, Florence.

tastes, turning for ideas to ancient Greek philosophy and art. The most famous artists of the Renaissance, Michelangelo exemplary among them, studied philosophy and presented themselves, not as simple craftsmen, but as sophisticated individuals whose ideas infused their work. In contrast to church doctrines that emphasized chastity and humility before God, Greek philosophy valued passionate mentorships across generations of educated men and vigorous competition within age groups. Ambitious artists, therefore, moved in circles where close male friendships connoted erudition and name recognition was essential. Because we know the names of famous artists like Donatello, Cellini, Michelangelo, and Leonardo, we recognize them when they appear—as they all do—in legal records and satirical poems describing sex between men. A survey of these artists reflects a range of attitudes toward male homoeroticism during the Renaissance.

In Florence, Donato di Niccolò di Betto Bardi, known as Donatello (1386–1466), never married and the records from his patron Cosimo de Medici repeatedly refute rumors that the artist's erotic interests led him to choose apprentices more for their beauty than for their talent. This has led some scholars to interpret his winsome statue of *David*, the boy warrior of the Bible (Figure 2.5), as a record of the artist's erotic desires. Donatello transformed the figure from the traditional bearded prophet to a beautiful youth, whose nudity is sexualized by the long feather from the slain Goliath's helmet that caresses the length of David's leg, intimating an erotic basis for the boy's unexpected power over his older opponent. Details from the biblical account—its emphasis on David's beauty, the fact that David beheads Goliath after felling him with his slingshot (just as Judith beheads the enemy general Holofernes after seducing him) and the fact that, after presenting Goliath's head to Saul, David offers the king the foreskins of one hundred more Philistines in tribute (1 Samuel 17:4–51, 18:25–27)—support a sexual reading of the sculpture, but provide inconclusive evidence about the sculptor's erotic life.

Better documented was the sculptor Benvenuto Cellini (1500–71), who, while serving four years of luxurious house arrest on a second sodomy conviction, became the first artist to write an autobiography. Featuring murder and burglary charges, as well as a string of illegitimate

Figure 2.6. Benvenuto Cellini, *Ganymede and the Eagle* (1545–46), marble, Museo Nazionale del Bargello, Florence. Photographs courtesy of James Saslow.

children, his narrative makes for lively reading. In view of his legal predicament, it is unsurprising that Cellini denied the sodomy charges, but his logic—that he was too humble for "such a noble practice" suited for gods and "the greatest emperors and kings"—seems backhanded at best, and he avows his youthful emotional attachment to other men. A number of Cellini's sculptures created after the sodomy charge have been interpreted as defiant celebrations of erotic bonds between men and youths. His *Ganymede and the Eagle* depicts the shepherd lustfully abducted by Zeus, who took the form of an eagle to seize the boy (Figure 2.6). In Cellini's version, however, the figures' relative scale renders the conventional version of the story implausible, instead casting the seductive youth as the protagonist, an effect emphasized by the way Ganymede lovingly strokes the feathers of the eagle. The fact that this sculpture was created using the broken fragments of a Greco-Roman torso (Cellini added the head, arms, lower legs, and, of course, the eagle) casts this erotic rewriting of the Ganymede myth as an extension of authentic classical taste.

Another famous artist of this period was the Sienese painter Gianantonio Bazzi (1477–1549), who promoted himself as "Il Sodoma"—the Sodomite. Georgio Vasari's *Lives of the Painters* (1550), considered the first book of art history, reports that Sodoma's nickname derived from his "licentious and dishonorable" behavior: "he always had boys and beardless youths about him of whom he was inordinately fond." In

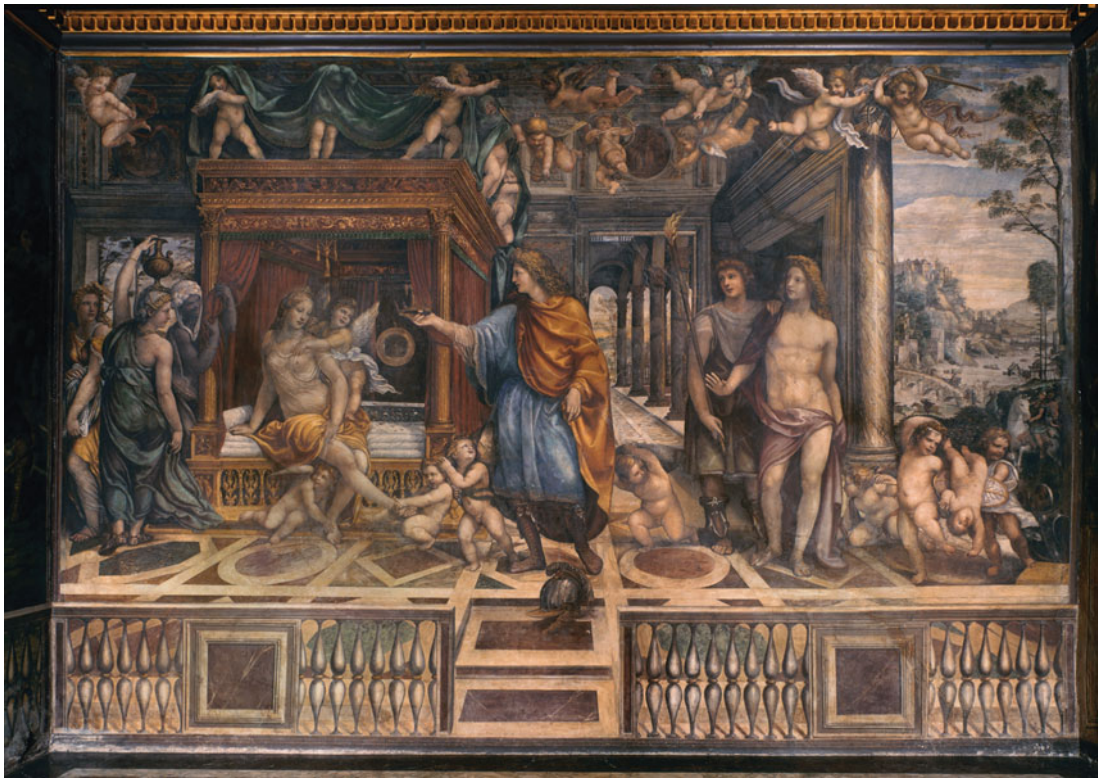

Figure 2.7. Sodoma, *Marriage of Alexander* (1514), fresco, Villa Farnesina, Rome, Photo credit: Scala/Art Resource, NY. Painted for the bedroom where a wealthy Vatican official met his female lover, the mural makes erudite allusion to classical Greek sanction for a wide range of erotic passions. It depicts the emperor Alexander's marriage attended by Hymen, the Greek god of marriage, and Hephaestion, Alexander's male lover, whose figure is based on the famous classical statue of the Apollo Belvedere.

addition to these eccentricities, Sodoma was notorious for dressing garishly and living with a menagerie of exotic animals. Despite his reputation, however, Sodoma, like Cellini, was favored with commissions from churchmen, including two popes, for paintings on both religious and secular themes (Figure 2.7). His powerful, but symbolically conventional, representations of the *Martyrdom of St. Sebastian*, Vasari reports, were widely praised (Figure 2.8).

Leonardo da Vinci (1452–1519) and Michelangelo Buonarroti (1475–1564), the two most famous artists of the Italian Renaissance, exemplify the more intellectual manifestations of the era's sexual norms. Both studied Greek philosophy and both contested homophobic attacks on such scholarship. Michelangelo addressed impassioned poems and drawings to several younger men, but vehemently denied rumors that these relationships were unchaste. Leonardo, along with several other men, was in 1476 twice accused of sodomy with a seventeen-year-old model. Although these anonymous charges were dismissed for lack of evidence, this brush with the law did not prevent Leonardo from taking into his household a beautiful ten-year-old boy whom he and his assistants repeatedly drew and painted. Though Leonardo's diary reports that the boy—whom he called Salai (an erudite reference to Satan)—repeatedly stole from him, they remained together from 1490 until 1516; Leonardo helped support Salai's family and bequeathed property to him. (Leonardo left most of his estate to a young Milanese aristocrat who

cared for him until his death.) A fictional dialogue authored a few decades after Leonardo's death has the artist acknowledge his sexual relationship with Salai, this "most beautiful young man, especially at about fifteen," and links the homosexual bonds among Florentine men to their manly virtue so that, "by such practices and fleeing the volubility of women, there have issued forth so many rare spirits in the arts."

The art of both Michelangelo and Leonardo reflects ideas they drew from classical Greece. Unlike the fictional dialogue just quoted, Leonardo's own extensive writings rehearse Greek ideals, condemning sexual passion of any kind and insisting that sensuality be subordinated to intellect. Although the androgynous figures in his paintings have been interpreted as evidence of the artist's homosexual proclivities, Leonardo's recorded comments associate androgyny with an ideal of a beauty that transcends lust. Michelangelo too followed Greek philosophers in arguing that male bodies exemplified perfect mathematical proportions, and thus were more beautiful than those of women. This ideology may explain the fact, noted by critics beginning during Michelangelo's lifetime, that his female figures display masculine proportions and musculature, but of course leaves open the question of why Michelangelo was drawn to these ideas. His male figures, such as the celebrated statues of *David* and *The Dying Slave* (the latter designed for the tomb of a pope), have become standards of masculine beauty (Figures 2.9, 2.10).

Figure 2.8. Sodoma, *Martyrdom of St. Sebastian* (c. 1525), oil on canvas, Palazzo Pitti, Florence.

Taken together, the freewheeling libertines, Cellini and Sodoma, and the artist-scholars, Michelangelo and Leonardo, demonstrate the Renaissance's contradictory attitudes toward sex among men. While homosexual acts were officially condemned, Cellini and Sodoma show that these rules—along with other forms of propriety—were flouted by men with powerful friends. In contrast, Michelangelo and Leonardo struggled to reconcile civic and religious sanctions against homosexual acts with competing philosophical ideals valorizing male bonding and male beauty. This ambivalent record has resulted in wildly varying interpretations of Renaissance art's relationship to homosexuality. In the late nineteenth century, when modern ideas of homosexual identity were solidifying, Renaissance artists were used to exemplify that type. John Addington Symonds's *Life of Michelangelo Buonarroti* (1892) challenged earlier biographers and editors, who had substituted female for male pronouns in published versions of his poems. But Symonds insisted on the intellectual nature of Michelangelo's passions. Noting that *The Dying Slave* helped define Michelangelo's "standard of masculine beauty,"

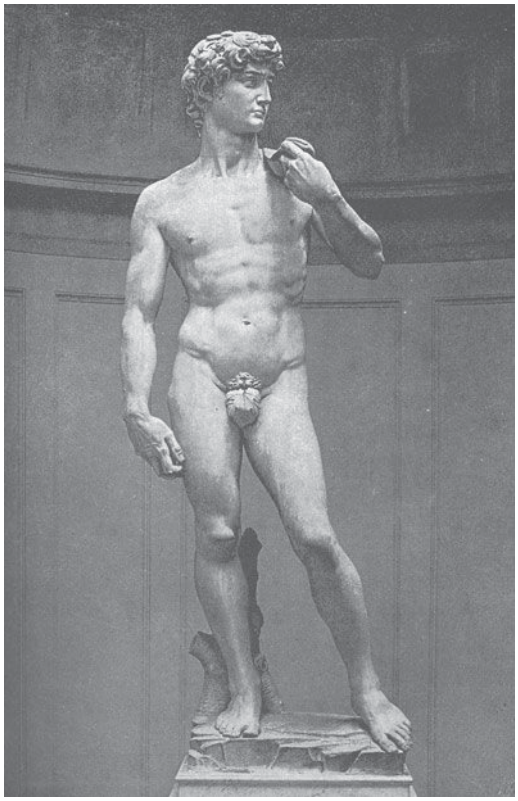

Figure 2.9. Michelangelo Buonarroti, *David* (1501–1504), marble, Museo dell'Accademia, Florence, as illustrated in John Addington Symonds, *The Life of Michelangelo Buonarroti.*

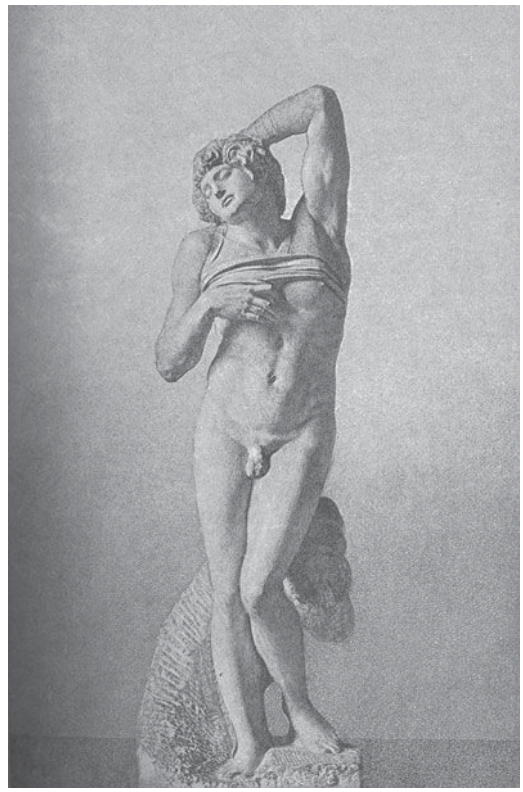

Figure 2.10. Michelangelo Buonarroti, *The Dying Slave* (1513–16), marble, Louvre, as illustrated in John Addington Symonds, *The Life of Michelangelo Buonarroti.*

Symonds guided his readers with the assertion: "It is impossible, while gazing on this statue, not to hear a strain of intellectual music. Indeed, like a melody, it tells no story, awakens no desire, but fills the soul with something beyond thought or passion, subtler and more penetrating than words." With his provocative sobriquet, it is not surprising that Sodoma was profiled in the surveys of homosexuals through history that, in the first decade of the twentieth century, appeared in scientific journals devoted to the study of sexuality. Most famously, Sigmund Freud in 1910 made Leonardo his case study in the origins of homosexuality, focusing on what he believed to be the origin of homosexual desire in men: excessive childhood bonding with the mother. In Freud's analysis, the androgynous figures in Leonardo's paintings reflect the artist's unconscious fantasy of reunion with his mother's body.

Freud's theories reveal more about him and his nineteenth-century context than they do about Leonardo or homosexuality. His analysis is compromised by mistranslations of crucial passages from Leonardo's notebooks. Moreover, Renaissance Italians did not share Freud's

Figure 2.11. Michelangelo Buonarroti, *Doni Tondo* (1503–1504), oil and tempera on panel, Uffizi, Florence. Photograph courtesy of the Yorck Project.

bourgeois assumptions about the importance or intensity of maternal love, which form the basis of his speculative descriptions of Leonardo's childhood with his mother and grandmother. Clinicians have since challenged Freud's theories about the relationship between maternal love and homosexual desire in individuals, while, on a more general level, historians of sexuality have revealed enough variety in social constructions of homosexuality to call into question any idea of a transhistorical homosexual personality. Despite these critiques, Freud's text profoundly shaped modern ideas about Leonardo and about artists in general. The common idea that art springs from the artist's subconscious finds its first extended articulation in this essay. More importantly for this book, by choosing Leonardo as his case study in homosexuality Freud influentially

linked this artist—and artists as a group—to modern notions of homosexual personality.

Freud's essay on Leonardo is credited as the first example of the hugely popular genre of psycho-biographical studies of artists, many of which have focused on Renaissance masters, humanizing or sensationalizing them (depending on your perspective) by projecting modern notions of sexuality onto their lives and images. Leonardo's famous *Mona Lisa* has been described as a self-portrait in drag, while Michelangelo's *Doni Tondo*, which juxtaposes the Holy Family to a crowd of naked youths, has been interpreted as expressing the artist's wish for the respectability of wife and children, with his homosexual desires pushed into the background (Figure 2.11). Such interpretations exemplify the risks of applying modern social norms to art and artists of other eras. In the Renaissance, patrons played a crucial role in determining the subject and composition of major paintings and sculptures, while assistants helped with their execution. Paintings and sculptures were created (rather like films today) as expensive, collective enterprises that, while possibly reflecting a director's authority over the craft, were not imagined to reflect his or her unique psychology—indeed, the idea of individual psychologies had yet to be invented. Thus, though Vasari condemned Sodoma's dissolute lifestyle, he praised the beauty of his *St. Sebastian*s, making no link between the artist's sexual behaviors and his renditions of the nude. Likewise, images like the *Doni Tondo*, along with the *David*s of Donatello and Michelangelo, were seen in their era as conveying socially useful meanings. Rather than hoping to psychoanalyze artists five centuries distant, it may be more useful—and interesting—to attempt to understand how images that look homoerotic to modern eyes commanded respect in a culture that officially condemned homosexuality.

The *David*s were, first and foremost, symbols of Florence's self-perception as a tiny city-state that could vanquish seemingly greater powers. In a culture where texts were rare even for the literate, images—both religious and secular—made for powerful pedagogy. That representations of David are attractive, then, is no surprise: they had to arouse emulation through admiration. Recent art historical analysis suggests that the grace and youthfulness of these Davids, which is new in Renaissance depictions of this biblical figure, reflect the Florentine elite's vision of their city as the inheritor of Athenian ideals, including a Greek appreciation for masculine beauty. In this view, beauty is an expression of civic virtue rather than individual desire. The submissive glances and passive postures of the Davids and Sebastians, which are often seen as flirtatious by modern commentators, may also reflect an ideal—repeated in the texts of this era—of Florentine youth as properly deferential to adult authority.

This is not to deny that certain viewers may well have responded erotically to these sculptures of handsome men. Likewise, certain drawings, especially those presented as gifts to specific men, may well have carried personal meaning for their artists. For the young nobleman

Figure 2.12. Michelangelo Buonarroti, *Ganymede* (1532), drawing, Harvard Art Museum, Fogg Art Museum, Gifts for Special Uses Fund, 1955.75. Photo: Allan Macintyre © President and Fellows of Harvard College.

Tommaso de' Cavalieri, Michelangelo made a pair of drawings matching Ganymede being abducted by the eagle (Figure 2.12) with Tityos plunging to earth from his flying chariot. These could signify publicly acceptable themes of sacred versus profane love, but may also express the artist's uplifting erotic infatuation and subsequent crushing guilt. "Ganymede" was common slang for the youthful partner in homosexual acts. Letters between Michelangelo and Cavalieri record the artist's ambivalence about titling the drawings explicitly and the recipient's reluctance to display the first of the two drawings, suggesting that the sexual implications of these motifs were on their minds.

For an important religious commission like the *Doni Tondo*, however, Michelangelo is very unlikely to have hinted at such meanings. The cluster of nude men behind the holy family has attracted numerous ecclesiastical interpretations, most developing the idea that they represent the pre-Christian world, which Michelangelo and his patrons might well have symbolized as a conference of men possessed of virtuous beauty. Dominating it is the Christian world, symbolized by the Holy Family with the Virgin Mary as its foundation. If it is unlikely that Michelangelo would have consciously used this commission to mourn his exclusion from the nuclear family, it is almost equally implausible that he did so unconsciously, for homosexual acts did not preclude marriage or heterosexual sex in the Renaissance. Both Sodoma and

Cellini were husbands and fathers. If anything stood between marriage and Michelangelo—or Donatello, or Leonardo, both also bachelors—it was Greek philosophy's view of women as physically and spiritually inferior. With celibacy idealized in both neo-Greek and Catholic thought, marriage, far from being a requirement of respectability, limited an ambitious artist's chances to be seen as part of an intellectual or spiritual elite. Despite fulminations by popular preachers linking sodomy with bachelorhood, within the circles where artists found lucrative commissions, imperatives to heterosexuality were countered by ideals that excluded women and valorized bonds between men.

In such a misogynistic culture, evidence of sexual relationships between women is scant, not, in all likelihood, because they did not exist, but because they were not considered worth recording. Although sex between women was illegal, in contrast to the abundant records of sodomy trials, there is no evidence that women were prosecuted in Florence or Venice, though one 1482 charge against a Florentine prostitute mentions that she served female clients. This silence speaks volumes about the era's conception of sex, which fixated on phallic penetration. For one woman to stimulate another with an artificial phallus was condemned as severely as cross-dressing or other usurpations of male privilege, but for most commentators anything women did together without a phallic appliance was not sex at all: when a seventeenth-century nun was prosecuted for having visions in which an angel required her cellmate to masturbate her, she was imprisoned for blasphemy, rather than for a sexual offense.

By the same patriarchal token, evidence of women as artists is sparse in the Renaissance—not because women were uncreative, but because, as painting and sculpture gained prestige by their association with competitive scholarship, women were excluded from these professions and confined to fields such as needlework, which retained the status of anonymous crafts. The subordination of women meant that the Renaissance left no rosters of famous artistic names charged with lesbian activity to parallel the male artists accused of sodomy. The relationship of art to understandings of female homoeroticism in the Renaissance, therefore, centers on our interpretation of images.

Scenes of women bathing together, for example, echo textual sources in suggesting the acceptability of intimate touch among women. Often illustrating the goddess Diana bathing with her nymphs, this imagery grew increasingly sensual through the fifteenth and sixteenth centuries, so that by the 1560s the nymphs depicted in Paolo Veronese's panel painting (probably from a piece of decorated furniture) reach for one another's genitals and kiss one another's breasts (Figure 2.13). Similar imagery characterizes prints of the period, suggesting its popular appeal. As the figure of the watching Actaeon in Veronese's composition suggests, however, such images, though they may have appealed to women, also assumed the pleasurable gaze of men. Texts from the period reinforce

Figure 2.13. Paolo Veronese, *Actaeon Watching Diana and the Nymphs Bathing* (1560–65), oil on canvas, Museum of Fine Arts, Boston, gift of Mrs. Edward J. Holmes. Photograph © 2010, Museum of Fine Arts, Boston.

the fundamental heterosexuality of this type of imagery. Perre Brantôme's ribald—and posthumously published—essays on the sexual mores of sixteenth-century French court life recounts a story in which a female viewer is so aroused by a painting of women caressing one another in the bath that she demands sex of her male companion.

More explicit depictions of sex between women appear in northern Europe, where the invention of the printing press profoundly altered the nature of homoerotic imagery by providing formats that were reproducible, comparatively inexpensive, and small enough to tuck out of sight. Printed images of female homoeroticism were common by the early sixteenth century, indicating widespread demand, and these scenes, too, reflect men's attitudes toward female homoeroticism (Figures 2.14, 2.15). But here the emphasis is often less on men's pleasures than on their fears. Images of women touching one another in bathhouses blend with illustrations of witchcraft, a concept that returned to popular attention as a result of interest in classical, mainly Roman, texts. Sometimes satirical, but growing more earnest over the course of the sixteenth century, treatises on witchcraft emphasized its connection with female intimacy, citing as a common symptom women's belief that they had traveled in the night among Diana's nymphs or in other all-female groups. The still-common belief that witches fly on broomsticks may be traced to these texts, where descriptions of groups of women riding oiled sticks "to their pleasure" allude to communal masturbation. Johann Weyer's 1563 medical book is explicit in declaring that witches become "inflamed with love just as young men are for girls."

Figure 2.14. Sebald Beham, *Three Women in the Bath* (1548), engraving.

Whether a fantasy about female sexuality or a panic about female community, in both Italy and northern Europe, images of female homoeroticism consistently depict groups of women, framing such activity, not as an interaction between individuals, but as a manifestation of femaleness in general. Even where the images seem peaceful, as in scenes of Diana and her nymphs, viewers

Figure 2.15. Sebald Beham, *Three Nude Women and Death* (1546–50), engraving. Similar to images where the figure of Death encourages lust in heterosexual couples, this image associates female homoeroticism with circles of witches.

could recall that Acteon was punished for spying on the nymphs by being turned into a stag and killed by his own dogs, a clear inversion of established hierarchies of predator and prey, as of male and female. Discussions and depictions of witches, likewise, stressed their ability to subvert masculine power. In the north, a vogue for witch imagery coincided with Protestant attacks on convents, many of which were closed on the grounds that nuns, outside male control, were sexually promiscuous. One drawing of naked witches frolicking is captioned "DER COR CAPEN, EIN GUT JAR" (To the Clergyman, Happy New Year), suggesting the complicity Protestants saw between unmarried priests and witches.

Although such images of bathers and witches undoubtedly reflect men's fantasies and anxieties, there is no reason to exclude the possibility that women also responded to the seductive sensuality of the former, and to the perhaps equally seductive assertions of dangerous female power in the latter. Especially in northern Europe, substantial numbers of women were unmarried, often living in convents, widows' homes, and other communal settings. What may be most intriguing about these images is that they link female homoeroticism with communal identity in ways that depictions of male homoeroticism do not—even the sodomites, thrown together in illustrations of Dante, are a varied lot, their association clearly the will of a higher power rather than an initiative to bond among themselves. Whether nymphs or witches, the women who fondle one another in sixteenth-century images are positioned, certainly as deviants, but deviants of their own volition and with a common identity. That these clearly pejorative identities, perhaps wholly the fantasy of men, could be the roots of modern lesbian subculture may seem too ironic—or too painful—to accept. Nevertheless, the connection of homoerotic behaviors with outsider identity, which begins with women in this era, presages the idea of the homosexual as a distinct personality type.

SEVENTEENTH- AND EIGHTEENTH-CENTURY EUROPE

Nineteenth-century writers, such as Freud and Symonds, projected backward onto the Renaissance their ideas of homosexuals, subject as a group to scientific classification and as individuals to medical diagnosis. Although this paradigm was convincingly challenged by Foucault's insistence (discussed in the introduction) that sexual typology was not invented

until the nineteenth century, no idea is without roots, and subsequent scholarship provided evidence that convinced even Foucault to recognize stages in the eighteenth, the seventeenth, and even the sixteenth century leading to the invention of homosexuality as a personality type.

Ultimate consensus on the exact origin of modern ideas of homosexuality is impossible, for everything hinges on what is meant by "type." If we look simply for the idea that some people are attracted to their own sex—or, as it was often phrased, repelled by the opposite sex—such statements can be found in medieval texts and before. The much more concrete idea that such men constitute a distinct type, with an array of distinguishing characteristics and sensibilities, seems not to have been articulated until the early 1600s, however. And despite the early association of female homoeroticism with such outsider identities as nymph or witch, the categorization of lesbianism as an identity based on sexual attraction to other women came much later. These new ideas reflected broader social changes attending the increasing prosperity and urbanization of Europe. Greater social mobility led to categorizations—including self-perceptions—based less on inherited status and more on behavior and belief. And although newly powerful urban governments often increased legal sanctions against homosexuals (as against other minorities, such as Jews, seen as resisting authority), the unprecedented population concentrations in cities also made possible what historical hindsight reveals as the origins of homosexual subcultures.

Figure 2.16. Caravaggio, *The Concert* (c. 1593), oil on canvas, The Metropolitan Museum of Art, Rogers Fund, 1952 (52.81). Image © The Metropolitan Museum of Art.

The beginning of these shifts can be marked by comparing the careers of Sodoma and Cellini with that of the slightly later artist, Michelangelo da Caravaggio (1571–1610). Even more than Cellini and Sodoma, Caravaggio's fame as an artist was matched by his reputation as a rebel. He was arrested for offenses ranging from libeling his competitors and insulting a police officer to brawling and murder, this last in a fight over a ball game. Two of his arrests involved conflicts over women, but Caravaggio was also accused of sharing with a friend the costs of keeping a youth and was reported to have fled one town after fighting with a teacher who objected to his attention to schoolboys. What distinguishes Caravaggio from Cellini and Sodoma, however, is less the range of his rebelliousness than its effect on his art. Unlike his predecessors, Caravaggio was encouraged to explore homo-

Figure 2.17. Caravaggio, *Victorious Cupid*, 1598–1602, oil on canvas, Staatliche Museum, Berlin, Photo credit: Nimatallah/Art Resource, NY. Cupid—the personification of erotic love, complete with a come-hither smile—rises in triumph over the intellectual and heroic pursuits symbolized by the armor, musical instruments, and mathematical tools at his feet.

erotic themes in his art when he was taken up by a circle of patrons centered on the sophisticated Cardinal Francesco Del Monte. While living in Del Monte's palace, Caravaggio painted for this patron images like *The Concert*, which shows a group of young men in various stages of undress preparing to make music together, a common visual metaphor of the time for love-making (Figure 2.16). Like the youths in other paintings Del Monte commissioned, these boys solicit viewers with parted lips and sultry glances. In the cardinal's substantial art collection, these works complemented erotic Greek vases and a copy of Michelangelo's *Ganymede*.

Caravaggio's fascination with the work of his celebrated namesake is evident in many of his late paintings, which quote the poses of male nudes in Michelangelo's work, but turn up the erotic heat in ways that troubled subsequent commentators. Caravaggio's *Victorious Cupid*, painted in Del Monte's palace, fuses the winged eagle with the shepherd in Michelangelo's *Ganymede*, and combines adult musculature with prepubescent genitals and face for an erotic charge so disturbing that the first owner of this picture was said to have kept it concealed behind a curtain (Figure 2.17). Caravaggio's references to Michelangelo have been called "the beginning of a rudimentary sense of homoerotic visual tradition," but his attitude does not seem straightforwardly admiring. In Caravaggio's painting, the idealized homoeroticism of Michelangelo's drawing turns overtly lustful and pederastic. Whether Caravaggio sought to shock his patrons, to titillate them, to expose the carnal motive veiled by Michelangelo's erudite references to classical myths, to claim for himself Michelangelo's legacy—or some combination of these impulses—is unknowable, as is the degree to which such imagery reflected his own sexual desires. What is clear is that, by the dawn of the seventeenth century in Rome, circles of affluent men employed an artist to explore explicitly homoerotic imagery.

Nor was this circle unique. Kings Henri III and Louis XIII of France and other lesser nobles created courts that indulged an array of pleasures, including cross-dressing and sex between (and occasionally among) men and between (and more often among) women. By the late seventeenth century, Louis XIV of France, whose brother was notorious for his cross-dressed male favorites, removed sodomy trials from the jurisdiction of regional parlements to his own far more lenient judges. Aristocratic debauchery remained discreet, however; marriage and the provision of heirs were imperative, and even aristocrats could be threat-

ened by public scandal. Nevertheless, for the private delectation of these sophisticates, a body of risqué images and texts presented sex between men and between women within a broad array of sensual indulgences.

Rather like the "floating world" literature and images made for Tokugawa aristocrats at this same period (discussed in chapter 1), these materials reveal a fantasy of polymorphous sensuality that included homosexuality not as a distinct sensibility, but as a form of foreplay or—in its frequent association with such single-sex settings as monasteries, convents, and harems—a substitute for heterosexual sex. A 1751 French handbook by the philosopher Julien d'Offray la Mettrie, titled *L'Art de Jouir* (The Art of Pleasure), recommends sex between men and "amiable" boys as a way of preventing "the boring uniformity of pleasures" that can otherwise inhibit heterosexual liaisons. The frequently reissued *Satyra Sotadica* ("Sotadic satires," a reference to Sotades, the ribald Greek poet), first published in Latin in France around 1660 and translated into French and English by 1684, inaugurated many of the themes of eighteenth-century pornography. Early editions of the book asserted that its author was Luisa Sigea, a sixteenth-century female intellectual of some repute, and the stories claim a female perspective. In fact, the author was a man who, despite numerous descriptions of sex between women, repeatedly asserted aggressive heterosexual congress as the ultimate sexual act. As the reference to Sotades in the title of this book suggests, pornographic texts often masqueraded as discoveries from ancient Greece or Rome. The same was true of art. A lively trade developed during the eighteenth century in fake classical erotica, much of it so crudely made or outlandish in its subject matter that it seems less forgery than parody. Other images circulated as illustrations

Figure 2.18. Anonymous illustration in *Satyra Sotadica*, published as *L'Academie des Dames* (1680). This image from a French edition of the *Satyra Sotadica* exploits the cliché of nuns adept in lesbian sex while presenting the activities of the two women as a preliminary to sex with the man—perhaps a

Figure 2.18. (*Continued*) monk—about to top the fence from his ladder. Like the text, the print asserts a probably spurious female authorship with the inscription "La Mère Chantal fecit" ("Mother"—signifying either old woman or Mother Superior—"Chantal made it"; *fecit* is the standard Latin term used by printers to identify the author of an engraving).

for texts like the *Satyra Sotadica,* though they were printed and sold separately and often strayed from the plots they supposedly depicted (Figure 2.18). Printers also created special editions of erotic books with illustrations to appeal to particular tastes; one 1791 edition of the Marquis de Sade's *Justine*, for instance, illustrates only the sex scenes involving men.

Paintings made for wealthy patrons were only slightly subtler than such bawdy anonymous imagery. The seventeenth century enjoyed a vogue for depictions of an episode from the play (and subsequent opera) *Il Pastor Fido* (*The Faithful Shepherd*), in which Amaryllis is kissed by the shepherd Mirtillo, who disguised himself as a woman in order to win a kissing competition among the shepherdesses of Arcadia (Figure 2.19). The French aristocracy, in particular, relished such scenes in which eroticism between women cedes to heterosexuality. Even when, as was often the case, aristocratic patrons were women, their power relied on attracting men as husbands and lovers. One strategy was to use paintings, both presented as gifts and displayed in their own homes, to evoke a powerful female sexuality that, nevertheless, succumbs to the right man. Paintings by François Boucher (1703–1770), one of the French court's favorite artists, often suggest this scenario, depicting classical myths in which embraces between women are interrupted by men, or in which one woman is a man in disguise. Sophisticated viewers of Boucher's several paintings of *Jupiter and the Nymph Callisto* would recognize the eagle on the right as Jupiter's emblem and infer the heterosexual conclusion to the lesbian embrace (Figure 2.20). The implied narrative becomes explicit in a drawing (attributed to Boucher, though likely an imitation of his popular style) that depicts an aroused gentleman about to interrupt the love-making of two women (Figure 2.21). The man covers his eyes to lend mystery to the encounter—which of the two women will he penetrate? His blindness privileges the viewer's vision; only we can see what is happening. The pleasures of visual mastery are key to the appeal of these images.

Figure 2.19. Jacob van Loo, *Amaryllis Crowning Mirtillo* (1640–70), oil on canvas, Rijksmuseum, Amsterdam.

Again this art clearly says more about male fantasy—including the fantasy of prevailing over the disturbing prospect of female bonding—than about women's experience. As with earlier lesbian imagery, however, the fact of male agency does not preclude the possibility that women also found pleasure and inspiration in such texts and images. Historians tracing the roots of lesbian identity have argued that allusions to Lesbos and Sappho signified female homoeroticism for sophisticated readers as early as the seventeenth and certainly by the eighteenth century. In 1775, a limited circulation journal in Paris described a women-only sex club run by a famous actress and called La Loge des Lesbos (The lesbian lodge); a related account (Text 2.1) was published with illustrations under the title *La Nouvelle Sapho* (The new Sappho) in 1789 (Figure 2.22).

Figure 2.20. François Boucher, *Jupiter and the Nymph Callisto* (1759), oil on canvas, Puschkin-Museum der bildenden Künste. Photograph courtesy of the Yorck Project.

Historians seeking to understand the development of modern gay identity have looked to the eighteenth century to explore how men, too, negotiated homoerotic desires in aristocratic circles in some ways exhilaratingly outside common norms and laws, though subject to their own potentially strict mores. A central figure in this history is the pioneering art historian Johann Winckelmann (1717–68), who rose from working-class origins to join, as secretary or librarian, aristocratic courts, first in his native Germany, then in Rome. Winckelmann's monumental *History of the Art of Antiquity*, published in 1764, is a crucial text in the history of art history, the first book to move beyond recounting artists' biographies by organizing artistic styles into movements that evolve from primitive through classic to decadent stages, a schema that remains influential. Winckelmann's location of his classic ideal in the long-ago and faraway world of ancient Greece reflected his sense of himself as an outsider, overcoming, as he put it, "education and circumstance" to follow his passion for an art epitomized by representations of the male nude. Winckelmann's attraction to other men and his sexual relationships with Italian youths he believed descended from the

Figure 2.21. Attributed to François Boucher, *Don't Look*, undated drawing.

ancient Mediterranean civilizations he revered were integral to his determination to push beyond what he called the "surface of Platonism" and emulate the ancient Greeks. These ideas were implicit in his books, which proposed, as the epitome of late-classical sculpture, the graceful statues of nude youths that were plentiful in Italian collections. Observing these sculptures firsthand, as he insisted was necessary to true understanding, Winckelmann associated the idea of beauty with scrutinizing the male nude in loving detail, down to stylistic analyses of ears, knees, nipples, and even genitalia. His claims to experience in his own body the uplifting Greek "freedom" embodied in these statues were made in rhetoric so vague that they appealed to his aristocratic patrons and then, thirty years later, to artists supporting the French Revolution, who based their figures symbolizing violently anti-aristocratic politics on Winckelmann's illustrations of statues of Greek warriors.

Outside aristocratic circles, attitudes toward all forms of sexual license varied with the disposition of rulers and the flux of current events, as

FROM *LA NOUVELLE SAPHO OU HISTOIRE DE LA SECTE ANANDRYNE* (PARIS: P. F. DIDOT, 1793), 38–40 (TRANSLATION BY CHRISTOPHER REED, NOTES IN ORIGINAL)

Entering, I saw the sacred fire, a lively fragrant flame springing from a golden lamp, constantly dying down and constantly revived with an aromatic powder being ceaselessly cast onto it by the couple charged with this task made onerous by the continual attention it required. Arriving at the feet of the President, who was Mademoiselle Raucourt (1), Madame Furiel said, "Most beautiful President and dear companions, here is a postulant: she seems to me to have all the required qualities. She has never known a man, she is marvelously well made, and in the tests I have put her to I have recognized her to be full of passion and ardor: I ask that she be admitted among us under the name Sapho." Following these words, we withdrew in order to allow the deliberations. After several minutes had passed, one of the two guardians came to inform me that by acclamation I had been admitted to the test. She disrobed me, leaving me absolutely naked, then gave me a pair of mules or low slippers, wrapped me in a simple dressing gown, and brought me in this fashion before the assembly. The president having descended with her pupil from her plinth, they laid me out there and pulled off my robe. This state, amid so many witnesses, felt unendurable, and I twisted in every direction to escape their looks, which is the purpose of this ritual so that no charm remains unexamined. Moreover, as one of our most loved poets says:

The embarrassment of appearing naked constitutes the attraction of nudity (2)

(1) The celebrated actress of the Comédie française.
(2) The Cardinal de Bernis in his Four Seasons or Four Times of Day.

problems from crop failures to falling stock prices were attributed to public immorality and occasioned bursts of legal repression. In general, however, trends favored lesser punishments but increased regulation. The Paris police compiled extensive directories of men believed to be sodomites, listing 20,000 names in 1725 and 40,000 by 1780. At the same period, the governors of Amsterdam were so concerned about homosexual behavior among both men and women that they recorded the details of every case they tried, creating a legal record so titillating that in 1765 they had to prohibit individual aldermen from borrowing or copying passages for their own use. Homosexual acts, when prosecuted, resulted in wildly varying punishments, from warnings (usually for the young) to banishments (usually for the affluent) to long prison sentences, deportation, and death. As in Renaissance Italy, although individual clerics made careers of denouncing sodomy and other sins, religious institutions were generally less concerned about homosexuality than were city governments. Throughout the eighteenth century, laws regulating

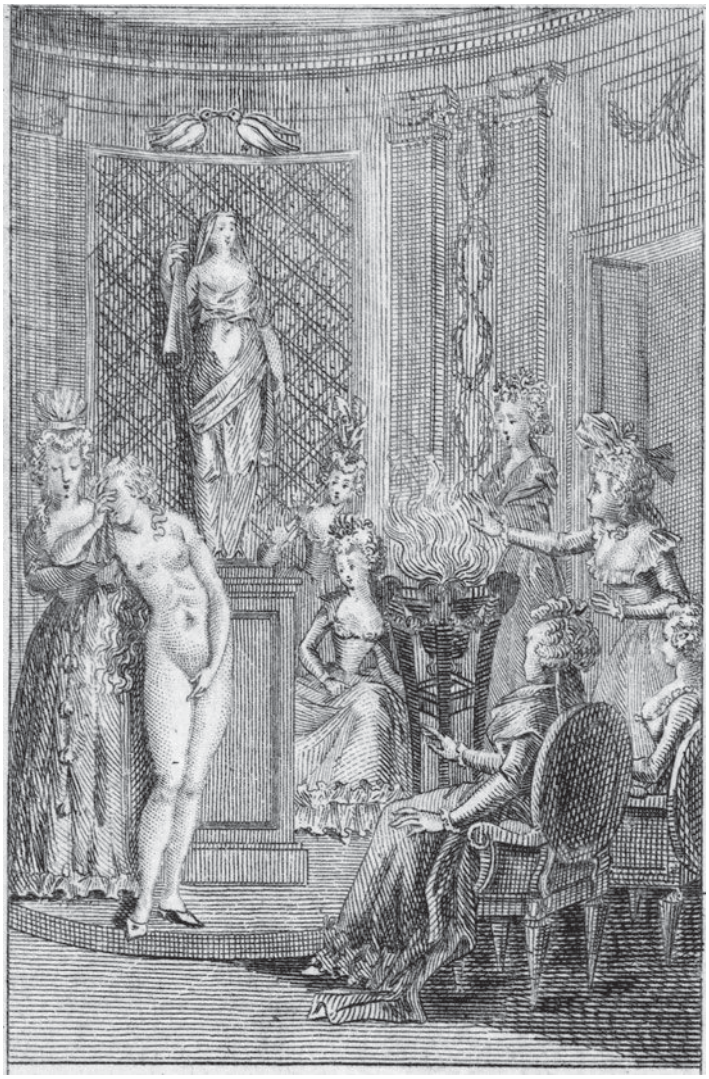

Figure 2.22. Anonymous illustration in *La Nouvelle Sapho* (1793). © The British Library Board. PC31a27. Details from different moments of the story are conflated to maximize the viewer's sight of the naked "postulant."

sex were justified less as religious imperatives than as measures to ensure public order.

While most jurists—and probably most of those accused—continued to perceive homosexual acts as shameful or sinful behaviors, eighteenth-century court records reveal inklings of new conceptions of homosexuality as both a product of innate sensibility and a potentially affirmative bond between individuals. French police records from the 1730s began to claim that homosexual desire was "in the blood" of certain individuals, and historians have noted shifts in police terminology from *sodomite,* with its biblical roots, to *pederast,* a category defined as a condition of "character" deduced, often by undercover agents, from the subject's frequenting of notorious places or use of suspicious phrases, without sexual activity necessarily taking place. The detailed court records from a Dutch crackdown on sodomy in the 1730s generated both a record of two men who privately contracted marriage together and an account of the trials that may be the first text to classify men drawn to sodomy as "hermaphrodites in their minds" and "a feminine mind in a man's body." Accusations of mental hermaphroditism and the mismatch of mental and bodily gender grew increasingly common in western Europe during the 1700s; by the end of the century, men in several Dutch cities were recorded defending their sexual practices with assertions that they were born with such dispositions. Visual evidence for such new ideas is at least as fragmentary as these texts, and has attracted far less scholarly research. Accounts of committed male couples correlate with a crystal goblet from the 1740s inscribed with an image of two men kissing and a verse celebrating their union as echoing the biblical love of Jonathan and David (Figure 2.23).

Although most evidence for burgeoning ideas of homosexuality as a personality type concerns men, there are suggestions of similar ideas

about women. Eighteenth-century medical and moral treatises paid increasing attention to the possibility of "sodomy" between women, with one text in 1700 attempting to redress the problem that "as to how this takes place, nobody that I have seen explains" by proposing a distinction between stimulation with a finger or implement (not sodomy) and with a clitoris (sodomy). In England, a 1741 pamphlet, *Pamela Censured,* condemning Samuel Richardson's novel *Pamela*, in which a Mrs. Jewkes tries to seduce the heroine, warned that there were already "too many who assume the Characters of Women of Mrs. Jewkes's Cast. I mean Lovers of their own Sex." This use of the term *cast* is analyzed by one historian as implying "that she was moulded (cast) that way by God, or that her condition is due to chance (a cast of the dice). Either way, it sounds like a permanent identity based on desiring women."

These shifting conceptions of homosexuality reflect broader social trends that recognized individual differences in people's relationships to religion and to one another. Protestant sectarianism and competitive capitalism, the two primary manifestations of this change, originated in Holland and England, so it makes sense that rudimentary ideas of homosexuality as personality type also turn up first in northern Europe. Early records of sodomy prosecutions cite barber-surgeons and schoolteachers as likely professions for sodomites; it was not until the nineteenth century that homosexuality was connected to artists. The rise of capitalism led to art markets that, unlike Caravaggio's tightly knit patronage circle, required artists to work as entrepreneurs, offering their wares to a general public. In such circumstances, ambitious artists sought to avoid scandal. The effect of the increasing public scrutiny of homosexuality is registered in art, therefore, by burgeoning anxieties over imagery that could be interpreted as homoerotic. When the Dutch painter Peter Paul Rubens (1577–1640) copied a Renaissance image of Venus by Titian, for instance, he changed her entourage of embracing cherubs from little boys to little boys and girls.

Figure 2.23. Inscribed goblet (c. 1740), Silesian lead crystal, Schwules Museum, Berlin. The inscription reads: "You are my good friend, so in harmony are we. Be my Jonathan and I your David will be."

Anxiety over the meanings of the male nude was especially strong in France. Since the seventeenth century, French artists had followed Renaissance conventions that made the heroic male body—especially the

Figure 2.24. Anne-Louis Girodet-Trioson, *The Sleep of Endymion* (1791), oil on canvas, Louvre. Photo credit: Réunion des Musées Nationaux/Art Resource, NY.

male nude—a symbol for a range of civic virtues. By the late eighteenth century, however, reaction against both the aristocracy and the violent terrors of the Revolution prompted artists and patrons to seek out anti-heroic imagery. Turning to Winckelmann's art history, with its emphasis on cycles and change, artists appealed to post-Revolutionary audiences with images of languorous male nudes, known as Anacreontic figures (a reference to the Greek poet Anacreon, whose love poems addressing both men and women had been repeatedly invoked by Winckelmann to exemplify Greek ideals and were fashionable at this time). Although histories of the French Revolution are often illustrated with period paintings of warriors, exhibition records reveal that Anacreontic nudes, emblems of romantic love, were far more popular subjects during the Revolution and after.

The Sleep of Endymion, by Anne-Louis Girodet-Trioson (1767–1824), which won renown for its ambitious young author when it was first exhibited in 1793, epitomizes the fashion for the Anacreontic nude (Figure 2.24). The youth's passive body, sprawled diagonally across the canvas, turns to welcome the viewer's gaze, which finds its reflection in both the admiring gaze of the winged Cupid (disguised as Zephyr, spirit of the wind) and in the rays of moonlight that represent Endymion's lover, the goddess Diana. The effect of Girodet's acclaimed innovation in

this depiction of Diana was to remove the female from this nominally heteroerotic narrative, making it a three-way exchange between the viewer, the sleeping youth, and Zephyr (whose homoerotic proclivities were known from his jealous murder of Hyacinth in another classical myth that was a favorite Anacreontic subject). The brightest illumination, shining directly onto the reclining figure, melds the viewer's perspective with Diana's, but closer inspection reveals this light of desire to be promiscuous in both origin and effect: light embraces Cupid from two sides, crisply highlighting both his buttocks and his penis, though the light on Endymion's body caresses it into soft focus.

Demonstrating the distinctiveness of modern ideas about sexuality, however, there is no evidence that audiences of Girodet's era saw his *Endymion* as homoerotic. Depictions of the male nude were required of painters who aspired to the art academies' highest honors (a condition that excluded women artists from these competitions), and the recorded assessments of teachers and critics focus exclusively on the technical skill and narrative sophistication of these images. Girodet himself described his composition as the result simply of his "desire to do something new" and "to avoid plagiarism." Nor are the implications of the painting clarified by the artist's biography. Girodet never married; though he maintained a lifelong, very public relationship with a woman, their preserved letters do not reveal whether it was sexual. Girodet was neither modest nor prudish, however. His self-portraits emphasize his handsome face—and repair his receding hairline. He was close friends with François Noël, publisher of a dictionary of erotic terminology in classical texts, and he illustrated the frontispiece of Noël's translations of bawdy Roman poetry. Some recent scholars focus on Girodet's Revolutionary manifestos to read his paintings as masculine endorsements of democracy; others look to his private correspondence—in which he frets over his poverty, illnesses, and fleeting youth—to assign the artist more feminine anxieties. What can be concluded with certainty from all this is (again) that modern ideas of sexuality are difficult to apply to premodernist artists.

Even into the early nineteenth century, mythology could justify depictions of amorous male couples without implications about the sexuality of the artist. In the 1801 *Ambassadors of Agamemnon Visiting Achilles* by Jean-Auguste-Dominique Ingres (1780–1867), the mature, sinewy bodies of the ambassadors contrast with the Anacreontic figures of Achilles and Patroclus. The younger men's sexual relationship, as described in the *Iliad*, is intimated by the visual conjunction of Petroclus's genitals and Achilles' hand grasping the lyre that, in form and position, echoes the youth's body (Figure 2.25). Yet this picture earned Ingres a prestigious prize, which recognized both his historical erudition (he studied Greek vases as sources) and his skill at organizing and rendering a range of contrasts (not only age and youth, but exterior and interior, craggy mountain and verdant palm, action and leisure, war and love).

Figure 2.25. Jean-Auguste-Dominique Ingres, *The Ambassadors of Agamemnon Visiting Achilles* (1801), oil on canvas, Ecole des Beaux Arts, Paris. Photo credit: Erich Lessing/Art Resource, NY.

Ingres' painting was among the last monuments of the Anacreontic tradition, however. The nineteenth century witnessed a hardening of gender divisions, with increasingly broad ranges of behavior becoming categorized as masculine or feminine and a concomitant growth in anxiety about deviance from those norms. This shift is evident in the devaluation of passionate friendships between men and in new attitudes about dance (where the emphasis shifted from male to female performers) and about fashion (where form-fitting breeches and extravagantly decorated male dress gave way to plain, baggy clothing). These changes are also reflected in portraiture, where restraint in dress and gesture supplanted the flamboyant costumes and poses of eighteenth-century male portraits. While the male nude remained officially ensconced in art schools as the paradigm of beauty in the visual arts, outside the schools it came increasingly to symbolize the obsolescence of conventional art training. The percentage of paintings featuring male nudes displayed at major exhibitions in Paris fell steadily after the 1780s until, by the end of the nineteenth century, this subject had almost disappeared. At the same time, depictions of female nudes increased, with the figures often stripped of classical narrative and simply shown as modern women at their bath or toilette. Ingres himself gained fame as a painter of female nudes and

never returned to Anacrontic imagery. When Girodet's *Endymion* was exhibited again in 1814, reviewers registered anxiety about the figure's androgyny, which helps explain why when Girodet later returned to the Endymion theme for a series of drawings depicting the loves of the gods, he adopted a far more conventional composition, with an embodied female Diana gazing at the youth.

For most of the twentieth century, on the relatively rare occasions when paintings by Girodet and other adepts at the Anacreontic style were discussed at all, their apparent femininity was explained away as the taste of the eighteenth century's powerful female patrons—though, in fact, none of the most celebrated examples was commissioned by women. Such explanations project modern notions of gender backward, treating them as fixed attributes of human nature rather than productions of specific historical moments. As is clear from this chapter's historical survey of European ideas about sexuality, however, such assumptions falter in the face of historical evidence of the variety of constructions of sex and gender. This is not to say that the modern era was completely untouched by what came before: roots of modern ideas can be found in premodern culture, while modernism often formed itself—as in Freud's study of Leonardo's paintings—through creative misunderstanding of the past. The following chapter takes up the formation of modern conceptions of both art and homosexuality as they developed in the nineteenth century.

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CHAPTER 3

INVENTING THE MODERN

ART AND SEXUAL IDENTITY IN THE LATE NINETEENTH CENTURY

THE PROVOCATIVE CLAIM (outlined in the introduction) that homosexuality was invented in the late nineteenth century emphasizes the creation of this identity by medical professionals, usually working at the behest of court systems to apply what were seen as advances in scientific knowledge to the administration of law. Scientists' "invention" of homosexuality was not a specific, isolated event, however. The previous chapter noted its origins before the nineteenth century, and many of its primary effects would wait until the twentieth. Homosexuality, moreover, was one among many new identities generated by scientists working to explain behavior by categorizing human types. A wide range of nineteenth-century medical typologies attached to criminalized activity (the kleptomaniac) and other forms of nonnormative behavior (the hysteric). Doctors believed they could discover physical causes for and signs of these types. Propensity to prostitution in women, for example, was correlated with the shape of the ear, while the influential science of phrenology associated myriad aspects of personality with the shape of the skull. Richard von Krafft-Ebing's influential *Psychopathia Sexualis*, which went through twelve ever-expanding editions between 1886 and 1903, offered a catalog of sexual identities literally from A to Z ("acquired sexual inversion" to "zoophilia"). The history of homosexuality emerges from this context, initially as a tiny trickle of references in European legal and medical documents. By the end of the nineteenth century, however, a torrent of often conflicting and sensationalized texts and images swept the idea of homosexual identity into the twentieth century.

Looking for milestones on the road to modern conceptions of homosexuality, historians cite an 1852 publication by Johann Ludwig Casper, a German doctor who argued that same-sex attraction could be congenital. Casper linked his conception of sexual identity to art. Describing one subject's Berlin home, he wrote:

> One would have to be extremely naive not to know immediately upon entering his room what was what when one saw the decoration with its reproduction Greek statues of hermaphrodites, and its strange collection of pictures, each boasting a posterior, mixed with pictures of pretty young men from the local garrison which the talented dilettante has made himself and continues to make.

As pioneering as Caspar was in associating homosexual personality with the creation and self-expressive display of art (including classical prototypes)—associations that, by the end of the nineteenth century, became common in medical literature—his assertion that these links were clear to all but the "extremely naive" suggests that by mid-century scientists were already responding to new social mores apparent in major cities like Berlin.

Other milestones in the medical invention of homosexuality include an 1857 publication by a French doctor, Ambroise Tardieu, describing the distinctive physical characteristics he said identified men who had sex with other men. In 1864, another German, Karl Heinrich Ulrichs, published the first in a series of pamphlets that used recent scientific claims that human embryos begin with both male and female sex organs to extrapolate the idea that homosexuality results from the accidental shedding of the wrong organs. Ulrichs called those who had this condition *Urnings*, a reference to Plato's invocation in the *Symposium* of the god Uranus to describe people whose lost mates were of the same sex. Often rendered in English as *Uranian*, this term was adopted by some writers, though others followed journalist Karl-Maria Kertbeny (born Karl-Maria Benkert), an Austro-Hungarian advocate of similar theories, who used the Latin prefix *homo* (meaning "same") to coin the term *homosexual* in 1869. In 1896, the idea of homosexuals as a distinct category of person was forcefully articulated in a book devoted exclusively to the topic and published in German by the British scholars Havelock Ellis and John Addington Symonds. Published in English as *Sexual Inversion* the following year, this influential text included a section on the "artistic aptitude" of "inverts," including their propensity to collect art. Also in 1897 in Germany, Magnus Hirschfeld helped found an organization called the Scientific Humanitarian Committee to study and defend homosexuals. Although *Sexual Inversion* was declared obscene and banned from sale in Britain, the attending publicity raised sales for the German edition. By 1902,

an index created by Hirschfeld's followers cataloged over one thousand publications on homosexuality.

More important than this catalog of events is an understanding of the social forces that caused them: Why did the idea of homosexuality shift from a type of behavior to a category of identity? What made this belief suddenly so compelling to so many people? The answers to these questions are complex and controversial, but lie in the rapid changes Euro-American societies experienced during the nineteenth century. On the broadest level, the collapse of aristocratic political power and traditional religious authority undermined old ways of understanding human behavior. Replacing these forms of authority, Enlightenment ideals of individualism and rationality encouraged new interest in differences between people and faith in science as a way of explaining them. At the same time, colonialism, industrialization, and the rise of market economies provoked unprecedented levels of personal mobility and urban population concentration, undercutting conventional agrarian networks of opportunity and obligation. Increasingly throughout the nineteenth century, individuals were freed—or required—to use their own intuitions and desires to compete with other individuals for things that earlier systems had provided as a matter of custom: professions, dwellings, spouses, and more. Exemplifying this shift, the 1804 French legal reforms known as the Napoleonic Code extended new freedoms of contract to include choice of sexual partners, decriminalizing (by not mentioning) consensual homosexual acts between adults throughout the French empire, which came to include most of western Europe.

As new legal and economic developments created unprecedented opportunities for individual mobility and innovation, many people reacted to the resulting social disorder by demanding new systems of explanation and regulation. In response, scientists offered various authoritative-sounding systems of human behavior to help understand and regulate unruly populations. Scientists elaborated theories of racial difference to justify the hierarchies created by colonial expansion and discourage miscegenation. Scientific claims were also used to police sexuality and to "educate" populations to self-regulate on issues of sex and gender. Masturbation, for example, scientists described as a pathology both leading to and caused by physical and mental degeneration. The "type" of the masturbator, which was codified and assigned physical symptoms (sweaty palms and a tendency to thrust forward one's hips) by the late eighteenth century, anticipated the development of other sexual types, including the "homosexual."

Absurd as these ideas may seem today, they were authoritative in their era and continue to inform common associations of homosexuality with transgression of gender norms. Indeed, it would be hard to overstate the importance of gender to the development of scientific definitions of homosexuality. Concerns over the implications of feminism and

the physical passivity of modern forms of office work for men aroused widespread anxiety about gender. Scientists responded by casting their new categories of sexual identity as forms of gender misidentification, a switching of genders or transcendence into a third intermediate gender in some ways comparable to Native American conceptions of the *berdache* (discussed in chapter 1). Deviation from gender conventions became *the* primary signifier of homosexuality—and vice versa. Thus, it became important for men who worked behind a desk to protect their masculine status by performing heterosexuality, while women were discouraged from following the logic of capitalism to compete with men for lucrative jobs by imputations of lesbianism if they forsook their "natural" female roles as poorly paid—or, in the case of wives, unpaid—housekeepers and child-rearers. The term *homosexual* was originally defined, not as the opposite of *heterosexual* (a term that was invented later and defined in dictionaries as late as the 1920s as another disorder: excessive desire for the opposite sex), but in contrast to what was seen as normal gender identity.

Though such scientific typologies developed in order to regulate people, they quickly exceeded their intended effect. The scientific categorization of populations into groups believed to reflect a natural order created forms of solidarity that, by the end of the nineteenth century, became the basis for new kinds of activism. Feminists used the idea that women across classes shared a natural bond affording them unique sensibility and insight to argue that female interests could not be represented by men, so women should wield political power. By the end of the nineteenth century, this dynamic began to animate discussions of homosexuality. Ulrichs, Hirschfeld, and Ellis used claims that homosexuality—or "inversion" as Ellis called it—was an inborn natural condition to challenge legal and social restrictions. Most of these early advocates experienced same-sex attraction themselves, and Ellis's sympathy was piqued by awareness of his wife's same-sex desires. For those less sympathetic, however, these medico-scientific conceptions of homosexual identity were used to justify incarceration (since diagnosis predicted illegal behavior) or attempts to "cure" individuals afflicted by this malady. Early treatments ranged from various forms of analysis to shock therapy and castration.

The dual applications of medical ideas of the homosexual type go a long way toward explaining these theories' widespread acceptance, since partisans on both sides of the debate claimed the authority of science to support their views. This acceptance, however, was far from immediate or universal. Writings by sexologists were available only to the well educated, among whom were numbered many artists and patrons, but even within this constituency the influence of these new ideas radiated irregularly. This chapter begins by surveying how homoerotic imagery circulated in late-nineteenth-century European art before turning to the effects of the new theories of homosexual identity on individual artists.

IMAGERY AT MID-CENTURY

As the end of the preceding chapter explained, the new scientific typologies' first notable effects on art centered on gender. European portrait conventions that had put men in elaborate costumes and languorous poses to suggest the leisure afforded by wealth now shifted to avoid implications of androgynous eroticism. This shift is captured in a newspaper cartoon satirizing how the sexologists' signs of homosexuality marked many older portraits, including the city of Weimar's 1857 statue to its famous writers Johann Wolfgang von Goethe and Johann von Schiller (Figure 3.1). Under the sexologist's gaze, their handclasp, meant to signify their bond as German Romantics, appears homoerotic.

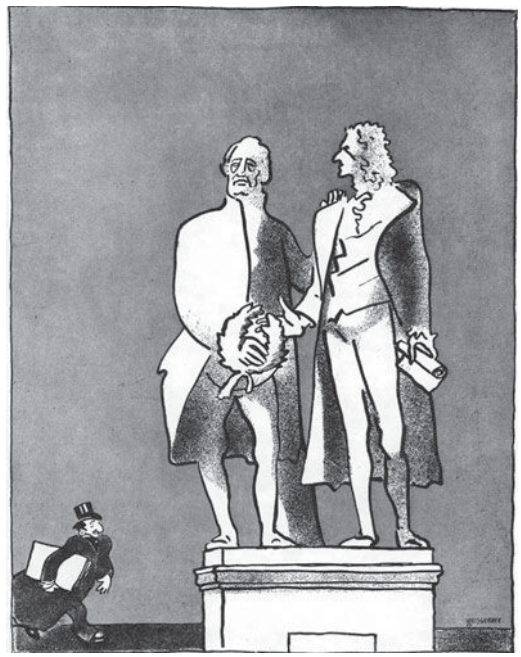

Figure 3.1. Cartoon from *Jugend* (Munich) (November 19, 1907). Photograph courtesy of James Steakley. The caption under this image of a monument to Goethe and Schiller reads, "Wolfgang, let go of my hand! Dr. Magnus Hirschfeld is coming!"

While representational conventions for modern Europeans were dividing along gender lines, images of the colonies began to reflect scientists' association of non-European racial typologies with "primitive" androgyny and homosexuality. As colonial enterprises sent more Europeans abroad as soldiers, administrators, or speculators, and as the income of European firms and families increasingly derived from colonial trade, artists responded to the demand for images of people and places under colonial control. Reflecting the colonists' perspective, this art depicted the colonies as both powerfully attractive (a source of both human and material resources) and in need of regulation (wild lands populated by cruel pagans). Sex was central to creating this image of the colonies as both seductive and needy. Jean-Léon Gérôme's (1824–1904) *Snake Charmer* from the late 1860s, for instance, exploited European associations of Arab culture with androgyny and sodomy—recall that European colonists in the Americas applied the Arabic term *bardaj* to create the *berdache* (Figure 3.2). The painting is sexualized by the phallic shape of the dangerous snake wrapped around the boy, by the androgyny of the boy's naked body, and by the elderly "charmer" of the title whose flute points at the boy's genitals. The apparent callousness of the Arab audience depicted in the picture flattered French audiences that their fascination and horror evidenced European superiority.

The degree to which fascination blended with horror in responses to Gérôme's painting, of course, depended on the observer. By the same token, depictions of eroticism between women in European art of this period invite a wide range of interpretation. Images of harems and markets for female slaves seemed to document the mistreatment of women outside Europe, allowing European viewers to justify colonization in

Figure 3.2. Jean-Léon Gérome, *Snake Charmer* (c. 1870), oil on canvas, Sterling and Francine Clark Art Institute, Williamstown, MA. Credit: The Bridgeman Art Library International.

moral terms. Although artists, along with novelists and journalists, supposedly depicted the harem in order to condemn the spectacle of women confined for the sexual pleasure of Arab rulers, elements of fantasy infused European consumption of images like J. A. D. Ingres' famous *The Turkish Bath* (Figure 3.3). The critic Théophile Gautier described this work, which includes figures quoted from Ingres' earlier paintings, as "a lovingly caressed canvas from his most suave brush, twenty times abandoned and taken up again, like a woman with whom one cannot decide to break relations, a sort of harem that he did not dismiss until the end of his life, and into which he came from time to time to take an odalisque or nymph." Here the critic proposes the male artist as a sultan, with the male viewer—that conspiratorial "one" who has relations with women—allowed a peek into his private harem. Gautier's remarks exemplify the eroticization of both the production and consumption of nineteenth-century art. In Gautier's popular novel *Mademoiselle de Maupin* (1835), a male character ruminates happily about how art—ranging from cheap modern prints of prostitutes to famous paintings by Titian—conjures a mental harem of women he fantasizes about while he makes love with his flesh-and-blood mistress. The novel's descriptions of art create a series of visual images for the reader:

> Oh you beautiful courtesans lying completely naked save for your hair on beds strewn with roses, under sweeping purple curtains, with your

Figure 3.3. Jean-Auguste-Dominique Ingres, *Turkish Bath* (originally painted in 1859, substantially reworked around 1863), oil on canvas, Louvre, Paris. Photo credit: Réunion des Musées Nationaux/Art Resource, NY.

> bracelets and necklaces of huge pearls, your fan and your mirrors where the sunset twinkles in the shadows like brilliant sequins!—brown daughters of Titian, who display for us so voluptuously your rippling hips, your firm, hard thighs, your smooth bellies, and your supple and muscular loins!—ancient goddesses . . . you all form a part of my harem; I have possessed each of you in turn.

Whether in paintings or in novels, such imagery was clearly intended for men. Its potential to suggest erotic pleasure—either for the women depicted or for female members of the audience—went unacknowledged. The possibility that the picture might depict erotic interaction among the women was first raised in 1905 only to be rejected by a critic who argued that the third figure from the right cups her breast with her own hand, all appearances to the contrary. Other vignettes suggest the erotic self-sufficiency of the women. Above the turbaned head of the lute player, for instance, a woman cradles the heads two other women in her arms while another one lies on her belly.

The nineteenth century's silence about lesbian imagery is somewhat surprising, for lesbianism pervades the fiction of the era (there is no corresponding literature describing male homosexuality). The glamorous title character in *Mademoiselle de Maupin* proclaims herself part of

"a third, distinct sex that does not yet have a name . . . ; I have the body and soul of a woman, the mind and power of a man." Cross-dressed, she infatuates both men and women, allowing Gautier to describe in detail amorous caresses between women. Of the ultimate lesbian love scene, however, we read only that the maid found two pearls in the unmade bed.

INVENTING THE "AVANT-GARDE"

The differences between literature and painting at this period reflect their economics: it is one thing to sell copies of a book with a lesbian plot that can be secreted in personal libraries, and quite another to market an expensive painting that marks the buyer's rooms for any visitor to see. Authors (and their illustrators), therefore, preceded the fine arts in depictions of homoeroticism. By the late eighteenth century, as literature scholar Andrew Elfenbein explains, Romantic authors "used transgressive sexual representations, especially those of same-sex eroticism," to attract attention to the novelty of their writings. In a competitive market, authors "who lacked a university education, London connections, or inherited wealth seized the role of untutored genius to justify their entitlement to authorship." This ideal of "genius," marked by innate prowess rather than careful training, grew increasingly important through the nineteenth century, powerfully influencing the production and reception of both literature and the visual arts. It is significant in this chronology that Gautier's novel, written in the mid-1830s, only achieved popularity a quarter-century later at the time of the vogue for harem paintings. It was not only risqué themes that marked authors and artists as geniuses. The "daring and wildness" of genius was associated in the life of these creators, in Elfenbein's words, "with androgyny and with unsuitability for traditional domestic arrangements." By the end of the nineteenth century, sexologists' ideas of personality types combined with the idea that the best artists were a breed set apart: geniuses with special access to the exotic realms they depicted (think of Gautier's description of Ingres). Artistic priorities shifted during this period away from skills and knowledge acquired by academic study and toward expression of a personality type defined by ambition, adventurousness, rebelliousness, and constant innovation. Starting in the 1830s—and despite complaints from the critic Charles Baudelaire that the military metaphor was not individualistic enough (even "avant-garde" battalions are groups)—the term stuck: by the 1860s, this new type of artist was widely known as the "avant-garde."

The term *avant-garde* derived from the soldiers who led armies into battle in an era when wars were fought increasingly for possession of colonies. Casting themselves as soldiers who conquered exotic realms where rules of home and homeland do not apply, artists who aspired to be avant-garde willfully violated the norms that defined both good art

Figure 3.4. Gustave Courbet, *Sleep* (1866), oil on canvas, Musée du Petit Palais, Paris. Photo credit: Erich Lessing/ Art Resource, NY.

and proper behavior. As is suggested by the French origins of the term, the avant-garde first flourished in France. The foreword to Gautier's 1835 *Mademoiselle de Maupin*, a manifesto for art that violates conservative moral prescriptions, offers early evidence of the avant-garde. By the 1860s, the leading avant-garde painter was Gustave Courbet (1819–77), who challenged convention with radical politics and blatant self-promotion (including pioneering use of press releases and photographic reproductions to publicize his work) as much as with the look of his paintings. Courbet's flat style and imagery borrowed from popular—sometimes pornographic—prints, flouted rules of both perspective and propriety. His nearly life-sized *Sleep* of 1866 committed to canvas what Gautier's narrator imagined, combining the scale and technique of venerated artistic nudes with details drawn from erotic novels and illustrations—right down to the broken necklace trailing pearls into the sheets, as described in Gautier's story (Figure 3.4).

The identification of art with an avant-garde is a fundamental characteristic of modernism, and continues to motivate artists and critics to the present day. While the avant-garde is often assumed to be politically and socially progressive, a careful look at its history in relation to sexual identity (as laid out in this and the following chapters) suggests a different analysis. Although when the term was coined in the 1820s, it was intended to unite political and aesthetic radicalism, this ideal has only occasionally been realized. Instead, the linguistic roots of the term *avant-garde* in mechanisms of colonial expansion reflect the broader pattern of the avant-garde's allegiance to forms of authority associated with the rise of capitalism and imperialism. As insightfully theorized by the social historian Raymond Williams, avant-garde subcultures experiment with provocative ideas and behaviors on behalf of the middle

class, practicing forms of social entrepreneurship analogous to risk-taking capitalists or soldiers. As with capitalist entrepreneurship and military conquest, successful aesthetic and social initiatives may be quickly assimilated to the mainstream, buttressing assumptions that the avant-garde is necessarily progressive. But, as with the colonial soldiers, the avant-garde's claims to heroism and freedom often mask conventional forms of authority. Avant-garde artists engage with the characteristics of "savage" culture, for instance, not to defend or protect colonized peoples, but to hone their own self-expression, a dynamic called "primitivism" by art historians. Primitivism—carried out not only in relation to colonized peoples, but also in the use of "folk" art, the art of children, the insane, and other subordinated groups—is fundamental to the history of modernism, as artists signified their individualism through their appropriation of aesthetics perceived as natural to populations outside the bourgeoisie. In order for such appropriation to signify artistic individualism, of course, avant-garde artists—although they might borrow the aesthetic of a subordinated social group—could not express solidarity with it. Even the most formally sophisticated and innovative avant-garde art (and artists), therefore, were required to guarantee their individualism with a stance of political naiveté concerning the social causes or implications of their visual references. The ubiquity of primitivism throughout the West and its colonies, however, makes clear the paradox that the performances of individualism prized by the avant-garde took part in broad social and political trends.

Discussions of the sociopolitical role of the avant-garde generally take the form of polemics. The avant-garde's defenders wrap their resistance to such analysis in aesthetic terms, erecting semantic distinctions between "art" and "kitsch" or "propaganda" to exclude cultural forms that engage straightforwardly with social or political issues. Observers who foreground their political allegiances to subordinated groups, in turn, often dismiss the avant-garde as simply a manifestation of bourgeois power or racist privilege. But the effect of avant-garde primitivism in relation to modern ideas about race and sexuality was (and is) neither completely exploitative nor completely liberatory. Initially, scientific definitions of non-Europeans as sexually nonnormative—as androgynous, polygamous, promiscuous, etc.—were imposed on colonized peoples to justify Europe's dominance by asserting its supposedly more advanced and self-disciplined moral superiority. This power dynamic shifted when avant-garde Europeans exploited these associations in unexpected ways to distinguish themselves as individuals against their own culture's mainstream (Gautier and Courbet's interest in homoerotic harems, for example, or Gauguin's fascination with the androgyny of the Polynesian *mahu*s discussed in chapter 1). In addition to tweaking scientific hierarchies for their own benefit, the avant-garde's fascination with the "primitive" allowed certain non-Europeans to achieve celebrity by exploiting their exotic identity to appeal to avant-garde audiences. When the

Egyptian-born diplomat Khalil Bey, for example, retired to Paris after serving as Turkish ambassador to Moscow, he courted fashionable Parisians by presenting himself as their idea of a sultan in exile, complete with an art collection that included both Ingres' *Turkish Bath* and Courbet's *Sleep*. This display of homoerotic art by European painters helped to authenticate his status as, in the words of the journalists he cultivated, "a prince from an Oriental tale."

Since its naming by medical professionals in the mid–nineteenth century, homosexuality aroused similarly ambiguous responses: while homosexuality was authoritatively condemned, its attributes exerted a powerful fascination for artists and audiences in search of new forms of experience. The effects of this fascination resist simple assessment. On one hand, the art of Gautier, Ingres, and Courbet seems an improvement over the demonizing depictions of sex among women in earlier images and literature. On the other hand, their presentations of lesbianism were conceived as attention-getting strategies among men. Returning to the first hand, however, it is impossible to know how many women—in the nineteenth century or since—found in such imagery an affirmation of their own desires. If the effects of such art are debatable, what is certain is that the opportunity to exploit pejorative sexual typologies relied on other kinds of privilege. Artists who were male, middle-class, and heterosexual could hint at knowledge of androgyny or homosexuality to claim a place in the avant-garde in much the same way that a wealthy colonial subaltern like Bey could use Europeans' fascination with the exotic to enter Parisian high society. In both cases, pejorative stereotypes were simultaneously both exploited and challenged. Those who lacked such privilege, however, often could not escape being stigmatized by stereotypes that limited their social and professional opportunities and led, in some cases, to prosecution, imprisonment, and even death.

ARTISTS AT MID-CENTURY

The penalties associated with straightforwardly avowing deviant sexual behavior ensure that much remains unknown about the sex life of individual nineteenth-century artists or critics. By the end of the century, the practice of analyzing sexual behavior to understand personality was sufficiently established to produce detailed case studies, some of which described artists, but these were kept anonymous to protect their subjects. Around 1890, however, John Addington Symonds (1840–93), the historian of Renaissance art (see chapter 2) and Havelock Ellis's collaborator, wrote a study of his own "psychological condition," which detailed both his childhood homoerotic experiences and his adult relationships with men. Symonds produced this remarkable memoir in 1889 knowing he could not publish it (it appeared only in 1984), but hoping that some "scientific student of humanity" in the future "will appreciate my effort to be sincere." Well versed in the new theories of sexology, Symonds

described his homoerotic desires as an innate part of his character, but he also defended the moral value of his homoerotic impulses. Drawing on the writings of two contemporary poets, the American Walt Whitman and the Englishman Edward Carpenter, Symonds argued that his sexuality led him to long-lasting intimacy with men of diverse nationalities and classes whom he would never otherwise have known. For Symonds, these bonds heralded the dawn of a modern return to the democratic ideals of the Greeks, and he used his expertise in classical and Renaissance art to argue that earlier eras had recognized and even welcomed the impulses and emotions he experienced. A much-quoted appendix to his *Life of Michelangelo* (1892) engaged recent sexological studies of the artist to conclude that the artist, although "of physically frigid temperament," "was one of those exceptional, but not uncommon men, who are born with sensibilities abnormally deflected from the ordinary channel. He showed no partiality for women, and a notable enthusiasm for the beauty of young men." Symonds used this finding as an occasion to challenge the "medical psychologists of modern Europe" who classed "individuals of Michelangelo's peculiar temperament" as diseased, asserting, "The history of ancient Hellas [Greece] precludes this explanation of the phenomenon. In Hellas they found a social environment favourable to their free development and action. . . . It is not impossible that the tragic accent discernable throughout Michelangelo's love-poetry may be due to his sense of the discrepancy between his own deepest emotions and the customs of Christian society."

Symonds thus forged a productive synthesis of his historical knowledge of passion between men, sexology's claims to describe a separate class of homosexual people, and the efforts by Whitman and Carpenter to define that identity as rooted in love, open to a range of physical expressions of intimacy, and oriented toward progressive politics. But this balance could not be sustained. Whitman's and Carpenter's idealistic conceptions of homosexual identity as a fusion of ideology and attraction remained influential through the first decades of the twentieth century (as discussed in chapter 4). But these ideas were ultimately subsumed by medical authorities' claims to be able empirically to label homosexuals as a category of person defined by sexual impulses that increasingly were classed as a form of illness subject to cures of one kind or another.

In his own time, Symonds's uplifting ideals clashed with the repressiveness of his culture, as demonstrated by the record of artists who were legally prosecuted and socially persecuted for their sexuality. The promising career of the painter Simeon Solomon (1840–1905) ended in 1873 with his arrest in a London urinal for sexual activity with a sixty-year-old man. The legal repercussions for Solomon were slight (in contrast, his working-class partner was sentenced to eighteen months in prison), but the artist never recovered from the ostracism of former friends and patrons, retreating into alcohol and other drugs. Solomon's dreamy images often related to his prose poem "A Vision of Love Revealed in

Figure 3.5. Simeon Solomon, *My Soul and I*, as reproduced in Julia Ellsworth Ford, *Simeon Solomon: An Appreciation* (New York: Frederic Fairchild Sherman, 1908). One of many drawings Solomon made to illustrate his poem "A Vision of Love Revealed in Sleep," this coupling of handsome young men represents the author's encounter with his soul, described in the poem as "unclothed, save for a fillet binding his head."

Sleep," first published in 1871, which traced the allegorical journey of a repentant man who is guided by his Soul toward reconciliation with "the Very Love, the Divine Type of Absolute Beauty" (Figure 3.5; Text 3.1). Drawing on biblical imagery to express a deep desire for fulfillment both artistic and sexual universalized as a new religion, the poem records Solomon's struggle to reconcile aesthetic, erotic, and spiritual experience at a time before the idea of minority sexual identity took hold. Gender fluctuates ambiguously throughout the poem through the personification of abstract concepts like Love as handsome men and such images as his poet's heart as a "bride" whose tears are kissed away by "him who knows that she is wholly his." Similar ambiguities mark Solomon's 1865 drawing *Bridegroom and Sad Love* (Figure 3.6). Although it could pass as a rendition of the winged Cupid's leave-taking from a groom whose assumed-to-be-heterosexual amorous adventures are over, in light of the artist's biography the drawing takes on more poignant meanings. The bridegroom's grasp suggests less than wholehearted heterosexuality, and the image seems, more generally, to express despair at the impossibility of love between adult men.

For the most part, our understanding of the sexuality of mid-nineteenth-century artists and critics must be pieced together without evidence as concrete as Symonds's journal or Solomon's arrest. Children are evidence of heterosexual behavior, of course, but not of the absence of homosexuality: Symonds had a wife and family, as did Oscar Wilde, who by the end of the nineteenth century became the prototype of the homosexual. At mid-century, before widespread belief in distinct and mutually exclusive homo- and heterosexual types, these medical categories are unlikely to reflect any artist's self-perception. Nevertheless,

Figure 3.6. Simeon Solomon, *Bridegroom and Sad Love* (1865), drawing, © Victoria and Albert Museum, London.

a number of mid-nineteenth-century artists were later taken to exemplify homosexual identity. Examination of their lives reveals the fluidity of nineteenth-century sexual dynamics before they coalesced into the forms that structured so much of twentieth-century experience.

The English painter Frederic Leighton (1830–96) is a case in point. Never married, Leighton in the 1850s was known by the nickname "Fay" within his circle of anglophone artists in Rome, a group of men and women noted for their androgynous dress and behavior (the women sculptors of this group are discussed below). Leighton was fascinated by Arab culture and made five trips to northern Africa and the Near East, buying Islamic tiles and other architectural fragments. These he used to construct an "Arab Hall" in his London house, complete with fountain and onion dome, allying his home—and by extension his life—with the exoticism of the Middle East. Art, for Leighton, was a passionate engagement between men. His lectures to the British Royal Academy describe the "fecundating contact" in which viewers—at a time when the normative viewer was male—are "impregnated and transformed" by the genius of great artists. And throughout his life, Leighton maintained warm relationships with young men, whose beauty he freely noted in his letters.

FINAL PARAGRAPHS FROM SIMEON SOLOMON, "A VISION OF LOVE REVEALED IN SLEEP" (LONDON: "PRINTED FOR THE AUTHOR," 1871)

Now there arose before me the image of him whom we had seen sleeping in the ruined temple; his arms were wound about his head, which lay back on them; he was naked, but his form was wrapped about with the soft star-lighted air; his lashes were no longer moist with tears, but his face shone as became one through whom the Very Love was to be revealed. And now I felt the heart of the universe beat, and its inner voices were made manifest to me, the knowledge of the coming presence of the Very Love informed the air, and its waves echoed with the full voices of the revolving spheres. Then my Soul spoke to me….

And now the image of Sleep filled the orbit of my sight and through the veil of his form I saw him who bore the mystic saffron raiment wherewith he had covered his hands. My spirit well-nigh fainting, I turned unto my Soul, and knew by the increasing glow upon him that strength was given me yet again to lift my eyes. Well was it for me that what came was revealed to me through the veil of Sleep, else I could not have borne to look on it.

From out the uplifted hands of him who stood within the Holy Place there sprang forth a radiance of a degree so dazzling that what else of glory there was within the temple was utterly obscured; as one seeing a thin black vapour resting before the face of the mid-day sun, so I saw upon the radiance the brooding cherubim, their wings meeting, their faces hidden; I saw within the glory, one who seemed of pure snow and of pure fire, the Very Love, the Divine Type of Absolute Beauty, primaeval and eternal, compact of the white flame of youth, burning in ineffable perfection.

For a moment's space I shielded my eyes from the blinding glow, then once more raised them upon the Beatific Vision. It seemed to me as though my spirit were drawn forth from its abiding place, and dissolved in unspeakable ardours; anon fiercely whirled round in a sphere of fire, and swiftly borne along a sea of throbbing light into the Very Heart. Ah, how may words shew forth what it was then vouchsafed for me to know? As when the thin, warm tears upon the cheek of the sleeping bride are kissed away by him who knows that she is wholly his, and one with him; as softly as his trembling lips are set upon the face transfigured on his soul, even so fell upon my heart, made one with the Heart of Love, its inmost, secret flame: my spirit was wholly swallowed up, and I knew no more.

Many of these men modeled for paintings and sculptures depicting stories of passionate, nurturing bonds between men (Figure 3.7). His representations of heterosexual couples, in contrast, illustrate almost without exception stories with lethal outcomes. Anxiety over eroticism is not confined to Leighton's images of heterosexual couples, however. Another important category of his imagery, typified by the battle with the phallic snake in Leighton's sculpture *Athlete Wrestling a Python* (Figure 3.8) or the apparent undoing of the Ganymede plot (discussed in chapter 2) in his painting *Youth Rescuing a Baby from the Claws of an Eagle*, suggests fantasies of resistance to or escape from homoerotic desire. Taken together, Leighton's images might be read as illustrating a dynamic that

Figure 3.7. Frederic Leighton, *Jonathan's Token to David* (c. 1868), oil on canvas, Minneapolis Institute of Arts, The John R. Van Derlip Fund. Leighton shows the biblical pair after their separation due to Saul's murderous jealousy over David's popularity and divine favor. Jonathan is poised to fire arrows into the woods hiding David so that, pretending to dispatch his youthful attendant to retrieve the arrows, he can send the devastating message that his

is explicit in Symonds's sexual memoir: panic in the face of expectations of heterosexuality combined with contradictory wishes to be free of stigmatized homoerotic desire yet to cherish the impulses of tenderness toward other men that this desire aroused.

Despite what might now look like signs of homosexuality, however, Leighton's art was not seen that way in his time. His paintings brought high prices, and the bronze *Athlete Wrestling a Python* was purchased by the British government. Leighton was elected president of the Royal Academy in 1878 and made a baron by Queen Victoria in 1896. His pseudo-Arab home became a center of London social life, and his funeral filled St. Paul's cathedral, with the crowds outside so thick that people were injured in the crush. That such a prominent man remained unmarried did spark gossip, but it was Leighton's images of women and his gifts of money and patronage to female models that attracted innuendo during his lifetime. Leighton was also generous to the young men in his circle, however. If Leighton's biography seems to exceed the emerging categories of homo- versus heterosexuality, characterizations of the artist by his contemporaries are equally inconclusive. Though by the time of Leighton's death in 1896, traits noted in elegies—that he was "strangely sensuous," "rather effeminate," and "made more like a Greek than an Englishman"—were coming to imply homosexual identity, many of these terms had earlier been used to associate him with the excessive heterosexuality of the libertine.

Like Leighton, the French painter Gustave Moreau (1826–98) now seems to embody many attributes of homosexual identity. Moreau never married, living his whole life in his childhood home, most of it with his much-loved mother. Though he carried on an intense and somewhat surreptitious relationship with a woman, there is no evidence as to whether it was sexual or not. Like Leighton, Moreau

enjoyed a prominent career. His paintings commanded high prices, and he taught at the prestigious Ecole des Beaux-Arts. As with Leighton, Moreau's art looks homoerotic today. One source of this apparent homoeroticism reflects Moreau's practice of painting his androgynous youths from female models. In his depictions of heterosexual couples, the figures' near-identical faces and postures require viewers to scrutinize other indications of sex—delicately rendered nipples and barely shrouded genitals—heightening the ambiguous erotic charge of his art (Figure 3.9). This fascination with bodies is linked to fear. Again as with Leighton, many of Moreau's most famous images connect heterosexuality and death, and others, such as his *Hercules and the Hydra* (1876), can be seen as expressions of anxiety over attraction to the male body in general and the phallus (here a many-headed monster) in particular (Figure 3.10). But these images were not interpreted as confessional at the time. Moreau's *Hercules and the Hydra* was triumphantly exhibited at the 1876 Salon, the most prestigious annual art exhibition in Paris.

Moreau and Leighton exemplify how awkwardly modern binary identity categories fit nineteenth-century artists. But that is not to say

Figure 3.7. (*Continued*) friend must flee. This scene of frustrated love and coded communication precedes the parting of Jonathan and David when, the Bible says, "they kissed one another, and wept one with another" (1 Samuel 20:18–41). Leighton's Jonathan echoes Michelangelo's famous *David* (Figure 2.9), emphasizing biblical descriptions of the bond between the two men: "the soul of Jonathan was knit with the soul of David and Jonathan loved him as his own soul" (1 Samuel 18:1).

Figure 3.8. Frederic Leighton, *Athlete Wrestling a Python* (1874), reduced preliminary plaster cast, © Victoria and Albert Museum, London; marble replica, 1890. Inspired by the Laocoön, a famous classical sculpture, this was Leighton's first sculpture. It was widely admired, and, after initially modeling the figure in clay in 1874, Leighton authorized the production of versions in various sizes and in plaster, bronze, and marble.

Figure 3.9. Gustave Moreau, *Jason and Medea* (1865), oil on canvas, Musée d'Orsay. Photo credit: Erich Lessing/ Art Resource, NY. This composition echoes *The Marriage of Alexander* by the Renaissance artist Sodoma (Figure 2.7), whose paintings Moreau copied in Rome.

that their work is peripheral to the history of homosexuality. Whatever Moreau's own sexual feelings and experiences were, his art became an expression of subcultural sensibilities defined by, if not an explicit affirmation of homosexuality, then certainly a dissent from imperatives toward heterosexuality. During Moreau's lifetime, his art was seized upon by a circle of avant-garde writers whose exotic themes and convoluted language earned them the sobriquet "Decadents." Seeing Moreau's paintings as visual correlates of their writing, the Decadents produced innumerable poems celebrating the mystical eroticism of his art. In Joris-Karl Huysman's 1884 novel *A Rebours*, known as the "hand-book of the Decadence" and notorious for a passage of homoerotic reverie, the protagonist is fascinated by Moreau. The novel includes poetic descriptions of Moreau's paintings, and praises the artist and his works as exemplars of modernity: "By uniting and melding legends originating in the Far East and transfigured by the beliefs of other peoples," Huysman wrote, Moreau "justified . . . his hieratic and ominous allegories sharpened by the anxious insights of a completely modern sensibility; and he remains forever sad, haunted by the symbols of perversities and other-worldy loves, divine trances consummated without release and without hope." Such passages defined the "completely modern" avant-garde sensibility as a desperate fusion of the exotic and the perverse.

Emerging scientific ideas about identity types inflected *A Rebours*' presentation of avant-garde sensibility as something both deeply rooted in the individual's psyche and shared with others in a community: the hero of *A Rebours* finds that Moreau's paintings depict his own dreams. For the Decadents, Moreau's art exemplified a style of perception and expression that not only united a contingent of the avant-garde, but also defined a type of person. Not quite, but almost a total lifestyle; not quite, but almost defined completely by deviance from heterosexual norms—this community presaged the development of subcultures based on sexual type. A character in the 1901 novel *Monsieur de Phocas* by the Decadent writer Jean Lorrain says of Moreau: "In the light of his painting, an entire generation of young men came into being, languishing and tender." By 1920, Marcel Proust's *Remembrance of Things Past* used Moreau's art to evoke a type of androgynous young man by describing him, propped up in an elaborately carved bed: "next to him, on the frame of the bed was carved an

elongated reclining Siren, very beautiful, with her tail feathers in mother-of-pearl, holding varieties of lotus in her hand . . . with the palmettes and golden crown nearby; it was very moving, altogether the composition of Gustave Moreau's *Young Man and Death*" (Figure 3.11).

In another parallel with Leighton, Moreau turned his house into a semipublic showcase for his aesthetic. In 1895 he added a two-story gallery above the living quarters to display his drawings, studies, and unfinished paintings. Although not initially popular with a general public accustomed to the meticulous finish of Moreau's completed paintings, this tightly packed treasure-trove containing thousands of Moreau's works-in-progress became a Decadent pilgrimage point. Two characters in Lorrain's novel recommend the gallery, where, like the hero of *A Rebours*, the narrator discovers himself in the gazes of the youths depicted by Moreau: "these were just the eyes in my dream, the eyes in my obsession." Again, the suggestion that Moreau's art reveals what is already latent in certain viewers associates art and identity in a way that is almost—but not yet quite—the image and type of the homosexual.

Figure 3.10. Gustave Moreau, *Hercules and the Hydra* (1876), oil on canvas, Art Institute of Chicago. Licensed under the GNU Free Documentation License.

While the Decadents seem to presage many aspects of twentieth-century gay identity, mid-nineteenth-century premonitions of lesbian subculture characterize a community of expatriate American sculptors, almost all of them unmarried, living in Rome. Preeminent among these women were Harriet Hosmer (1830–1908), Emma Stebbins (1815–82), and Mary Edmonia Lewis (1845–c. 1910), all of whom made monumental statuary in neoclassical style, a genre of art long associated with the highest levels of male accomplishment. Dismissed by a competing male sculptor as a "harem (scarem)" of "emancipated females," they were described by the novelist Henry James as "that strange sisterhood of American 'lady sculptors' who . . . settled upon the seven hills in a white, marmorean flock." This sisterhood was a subset of larger Roman

Figure 3.11. Gustave Moreau, *Young Man and Death* (1865), oil on canvas, Harvard Art Museum, Fogg Art Museum, Gift of Grenville L. Winthrop, Class of 1886, 1942.186. Photo: Katya Kallsen © President and Fellows of Harvard College.

communities of anglophone artists (including Frederic Leighton) studying Italian art and American women escaping the supervision of their families by living abroad. Creating a community characterized by art-making, progressive politics—campaigns for women's suffrage and the abolition of slavery, in particular—and deviation from conventions of middle-class femininity, these women anticipated aspects of lesbian identity that developed in the twentieth century.

Harriet Hosmer was the best-known female sculptor of her day. Her whimsical statues of childlike angels, reproduced in many versions (as was common with statuary at this period), fetched high prices from such eminent patrons as the Prince of Wales. Hosmer's masculinity contributed to her notoriety. Nathaniel Hawthorne noted her "mannish" clothes. Leighton described her fondly as "the queerest, best-natured little chap." Hosmer dreamed of creating a temple dedicated to female achievement, and her art reflected her bonds with other women, both real and imagined. A statue of the nymph Daphne, for instance, she sent to a friend with the instruction, "When Daphne arrives, kiss her lips and then remember that I kissed her just before she left me." Hosmer created her most celebrated work, the larger-than-life-sized *Zenobia*, for the Great Exhibition in London in 1862 with the hope that the figure, which emphasized the dignity maintained by the Syrian queen despite the shackles of her Roman captors, would be purchased by another female monarch, Queen Victoria (Figure 3.12). Hosmer made extensive studies of ancient jewels to render the crown and belt, which contrast with the chains to suggest the injustice of this noble queen's confinement by her male enemies. Hosmer's friend, the novelist Lydia Maria Child, described the artist as "so much in love with her subject that she rejected as unworthy of belief the statement that Zenobia was ever shaken by her misfortune. To her imagination she was superbly regal, in the highest sense of the word, from first to last." Hosmer needed such role models, for she failed to attract Victoria's patronage and, until she threatened libel charges, British art journals asserted that she hired men to make her sculptures. In patriotic contrast, her *Zenobia* was enthusiastically received when the statue toured the United States, and Hosmer's reputation for depicting the dignity of strong women led to a commission for a statue of Queen Isabella in San Francisco.

Hosmer's colleagues also achieved significant recognition in the United States. Emma Stebbins was commissioned to create two

well-known New York monuments: a statue of Christopher Columbus (1867), originally sited in Central Park and now in Brooklyn, and the *Angel of the Waters* figures for the Bethesda Fountain in Central Park (Figure 3.13). But modernist disdain for neoclassical statuary contributed to quick oblivion for the "marmorean flock," and much of its work has disappeared, probably destroyed. In the 1980s, feminist scholars rediscovered Hosmer and her colleagues for the history of women artists. More recently, this extraordinary circle of women has inspired artists working to develop self-consciously gay and lesbian aesthetics. Stebbins's *Angel of the Waters* became the final, deeply symbolic image in Tony Kushner's 1992 play *Angels in America*, an exploration of the intersection of national and sexual identities under the impact of AIDS. A decade later, the New York artist Patricia Cronin embarked on an ambitious project of research about Hosmer, tracking down and making watercolor illustrations of every one of her sculptures. Those that have been lost without visual record are represented by blurry "ghosts." "Who gets written into history? Who is forgotten?" These are some of the questions Cronin says her project addresses.

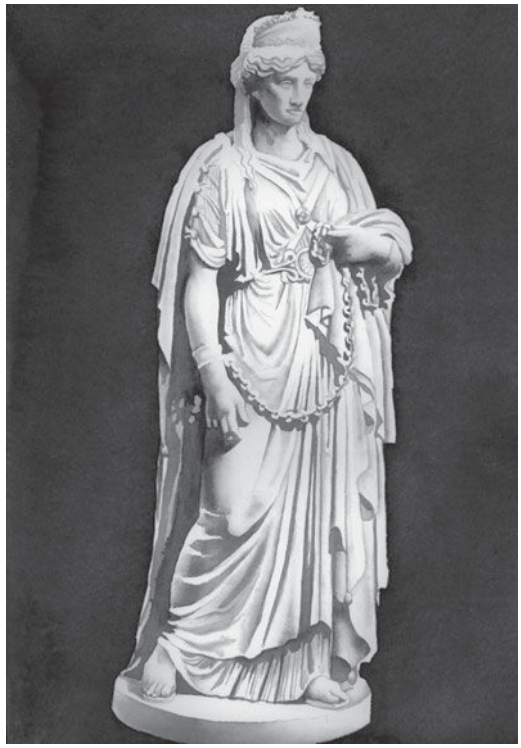

Figure 3.12. Patricia Cronin, Harriet Hosmer's *Zenobia* (2007), watercolor, from the series *Harriet Hosmer Lost and Found: A Catalog Raisonné*. Wanting to work in a specifically lesbian artistic heritage, Cronin, between 2003 and 2007, painted every one of Hosmer's works. This image reflects the dignity nineteenth-century viewers admired in Hosmer's *Zenobia*. Like other sculptors of the period, Hosmer employed assistants to help produce copies of her most popular works. Cronin catalogs three full-length versions and two busts in American museums.

Our understanding of these nineteenth-century artists as origin points for sexual and gendered identities that achieved cultural currency a century later is especially acute in the case of Edmonia Lewis. The orphaned daughter of a Chippewa mother and an Afro-Caribbean father, Lewis was raised and educated by whites with the financial support of her gold-miner brother. She quickly found success as an artist in Boston, where, during the Civil War, she personified the abolitionists' belief in the potential of blacks to succeed according to European standards of skill and beauty (Figure 3.14). Lewis financed her 1865 trip to Italy by selling 100 plaster copies of her marble bust of Robert Gould Shaw, a Bostonian who was killed leading a regiment of African-American soldiers during the Civil War. In Rome in 1867, she created *Forever Free*, a monumental sculpture of a slave couple with broken shackles, titled after a phrase in the Emancipation Proclamation. This and her *Cleopatra*, made for the 1876 Centennial Exposition, were enthusiastically received, but the backlash against blacks during Reconstruction and the declining prestige of neoclassical sculpture plunged Lewis into such obscurity that neither her place nor date of death is now known. Today the remarkable Lewis is often cited as a first: the first—here one can fill in "African-American," "Native American," and "woman"—to achieve international acclaim as a sculptor. With so many claims to fame, it may seem superfluous to adduce Lewis into the history of sexual identity,

Figure 3.13. Emma Stebbins, *Angel of the Waters, Bethesda Fountain*, (1859-64), bronze, Central Park, New York City. Photograph by Christopher Reed.

too, but she was very much a part of the proto-lesbian community of expatriate women in Rome. The other women in the group supported her—Stebbins helped organize funds to buy Lewis's work for American institutions—and Lewis was seen by outsiders as the clearest example of the masculinization of female sculptors in Rome because she insisted on executing even the most arduous physical stages in the creation of marble statuary, the rough cutting of the major forms for which even male sculptors usually employed assistants.

The relationships among these women do not fall neatly into twentieth-century categories of sexual identity. Historians, such as Lillian Faderman and Lisa Merrill, work hard to interpret data that to some extent suggest current ideas of sexual identity and in other ways expose our distance from nineteenth-century culture. Hosmer, for instance, referred to her circle as "jolly bachelors," while Stebbins called Hosmer her "wife," before transferring her affections to the American actress and self-described "tomboy" Charlotte Cushman, with whom she remained in a lifelong partnership. Records of jealousy within this circle of women and evidence of censorship in both the writing and preservation of their letters suggest amorous and even erotic feelings. Nothing specific is known about their sexual practices, however, and the frankness with which members of the group—especially the extravagant Cushman—expressed appreciation for women's charm and beauty in letters and remarks to numerous friends and relations bears complex interpretation. On one hand, such expressions reveal a deep love for specific women and for women in general, and there is no reason to exclude the possibility that this love included erotic or sensual elements. On the other hand, the openness of this love at a time when deep friendships between women were prized but lesbian sexuality was taboo shows that such feelings did not necessarily imply eroticism. Like Leighton and Moreau, therefore, the "marmorean flock" may be best understood as presaging, rather than itself embodying, modern homosexual identity.

Also like Leighton and Moreau, however, this community of women is central to the history of art and homosexuality. Though not founded on homosexuality in its current sense, the group was bound together by another form of what might be called sexual identity: its active rejection of heterosexual imperatives. And this identity was explicitly linked to the professional identity of the artist. In 1854 Hosmer wrote:

> Even if so inclined, an artist has no business to marry. For a man it may be well enough, but for a woman, on whom matrimonial duties and cares weigh more heavily, it is a moral wrong, I think, for she must either neglect her profession or her family, becoming neither a good wife and mother nor a good artist. My ambition is to become the latter, so I wage eternal feud with the consolidating knot.

Hosmer here opposed the identities of "spouse" and "artist," more vehemently for women than for men, to be sure, but included men in her initial statement of principle. The idea of the artist as a breed apart, as a type of person who does not marry, is further evidence of the convergence of sexuality and art as markers of related identities in the late nineteenth century. That this group of not-heterosexual women artists created a community based on this shared identity argues for their status among the closest progenitors of modern lesbian identity. Their belief that they were role models for other women—an idea evident not only in their art, but in their efforts to publish their letters and memoirs as evidence of their exemplary lives—parallels the Decadents' sense of themselves as harbingers of the modern. These women's self-conscious pride in their professional and personal identity also led them to seek out women they saw as allied sensibilities. Searching through history, the sculptors turned to figures like Zenobia, who, though married, was renowned for her strength and chastity. Turning to other successful women among their contemporaries, they collected photographs of female celebrities and made pilgrimages to the French painter Rosa Bonheur (1822–99), who "said such lovely things to us," Cushman reported, "it made me blush."

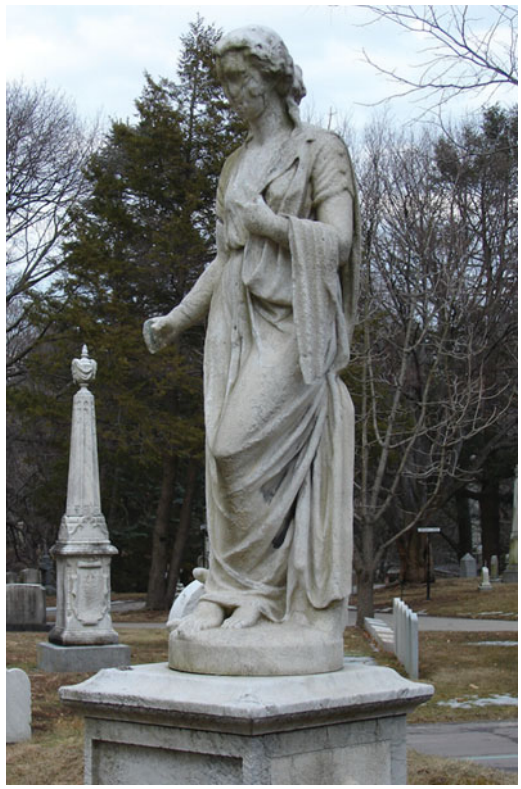

Figure 3.14. Edmonia Lewis, *Hygeia* (c. 1871–75), Mount Auburn Cemetery, Cambridge, Massachusetts. Photograph by Christopher Busta-Peck. A testament to the importance of late-nineteenth-century communities of educated women, Lewis's sculpture of Hygeia, Roman goddess of healthful cleanliness, marks the grave of Dr. Harriot Kezia Hunt, a pioneering woman doctor.

Today, Bonheur is often cited as the first lesbian artist, and by some measures this is true. Bonheur lived for forty years with a woman she called her "wife" and, after this woman died, spent the last decade of her life with the expatriate American painter Anna Klumpke (1856–1942),

whom she made her heir. Bonheur, however, downplayed her unconventionality and avoided the avant-garde, building her career on images of animals rendered in a conservative style. Her ability to make her unconventionality acceptable is evidenced by her successful career: she earned enough to buy her own château and in 1865 became the first woman inducted into the *Légion d'honneur* with her medal pinned on by the empress herself. When Bonheur cut her hair short and wore men's clothing—actions for which she needed permits authorized by a doctor and filed with the Paris police every six months—she claimed her masculine appearance was required by her work in the livestock markets. Her defense of her relationship with her "wife" reflects the ambiguity of sexual norms at the period. Despite the "purity" of their relationship, Bonheur complained that

> people tried to make the affection we felt for each other suspicious. It seemed extraordinary that we managed our finances in common, that we were one another's beneficiaries. If I had been a man, I would have married her and people could not have invented such crazy stories. I would have created a family, I would have had children who would have been my heirs and no one would have any right to complain.

Here Bonheur deflects suspicions about her relationship from sex to money, but then justifies her financial arrangements as the practice of a man characterized by all the husbandly attributes, including the expectation of children. Whether such statements were cannily contrived to confuse gossips or whether Bonheur genuinely never imagined the possibility of sex with her female companions is unclear. In either case, however, like the American sculptors in Rome, Bonheur's emotional life was concentrated on women she saw as spouses.

The fascinating ambiguity of Bonheur's life has long been seen as lacking in her paintings, which were dismissed by avant-garde critics of her day—and since—for their conventionality. In a pioneering 1992 essay on the representation of lesbian identity in painting, however, James Saslow argued that Bonheur's art is as ambiguous as her words, proposing that certain apparently male figures—the central beardless rider who looks out at the viewer in the celebrated *Horse Fair*, for instance—are self-portraits that subtly define "an androgynous and proto-lesbian visual identity" (Figure 3.15). This reevaluation of Bonheur in the light of modern notions of lesbian identity, Saslow pointed out, continues a process that began immediately after her death in 1899. The 1900 annual survey of literature on homosexuality published by Hirschfeld, the German sexologist, opened with an illustration of Bonheur in male attire captioned by a brief obituary identifying her as a "famous French animal painter" and a "mentally and physically pronounced example of a sexual intermediate." Here

Figure 3.15. Rosa Bonheur, *Horse Fair* (1853), oil on canvas, The Metropolitan Museum of Art, Gift of Cornelius Vanderbilt 1887 (87.35). Image © The Metropolitan Museum of Art.

Bonheur's identity as a female who defied gender norms to compete with men as a successful artist was linked to new medical conceptions of sexual identity. In retrospect, it seems that at this moment—on the cusp of the twentieth century—Rosa Bonheur posthumously became the first lesbian artist.

THE MODERN ARTIST AS HOMOSEXUAL

By 1900, when Hirschfeld's sexology journal identified Rosa Bonheur as a "sexual intermediate," this linkage of artistry and female homosexuality echoed the far more sensational connection of art with male homosexual identity created by the 1895 trials of the writer Oscar Wilde. Wilde, who epitomized the attention-getting strategies inherited from the literary cult of genius, was controversial even before his trials. A hugely successful London playwright, as well as an editor and frequent writer for women's magazines, Wilde thrived as a tastemaker who flouted convention. The women in his plays were witty and powerful; Wilde himself challenged proprieties of class and gender by promoting as newly fashionable old-fashioned aristocratic styles of dress and demeanor, which now looked feminine. His fame made his trials front-page news. Their attention-getting mix of celebrity and sexual scandal propelled debates over art and homosexuality far beyond legal and medical circles.

The complicated legal history of Wilde's trials was initiated by Wilde himself. Wilde sued the Marquess of Queensberry for slandering him as a "posing Somdomite" (the marquess's odd and misspelled phrase reflects the struggle for a vocabulary to convey the emerging notion of sexual identity as a role in which one could "pose"). After the marquess successfully defended himself in the first trial by proving that Wilde engaged male prostitutes, the government used this evidence to prosecute Wilde

under a new law that prohibited "the commission by any male person of any act of gross indecency with another male person." When the jury deadlocked in this second trial, the government initiated a third, which resulted in conviction. Wilde was given the severest possible sentence—two years with manual labor—by a judge who described this penalty as "totally inadequate" for the seriousness of the crime.

Two points are relevant here. The first is that the trials both reflected and amplified new medical conceptions of sexuality. The language of the 1885 law under which Wilde was prosecuted replaced older laws against "sodomy," a term courts had defined to include any nonprocreative sex act, whether hetero- or homosexual, that involved penetration and emission of semen. The new language, part of a broader law recodifying sexual crimes to reflect modern scientific taxonomies, prohibited a much wider range of activities between men, so that practices like kissing that had not before been seen as necessarily erotic were now branded "indecent." The persistence of older beliefs about women's sexual passivity derailed attempts to enact gross indecency laws for females (legislators argued that the law itself would corrupt women by suggesting that affectionate behavior could be erotic). For men, however, the new laws codified medical conceptions of sexual identity as manifested in a wide array of behaviors and eliminated earlier legal requirements of proof of sodomy, now allowing witnesses to testify about a range of behaviors or remarks. And the publicity surrounding Wilde's trials alerted a very wide public to these new legal and scientific conceptions about sexuality. Journalists overlooked sympathetic scientists' measured prose, instead quoting doctors like the Hungarian Max Nordau, who used new psychological taxonomies to attack modern artists for infecting the public with mental "diseases." Nordau's 1892 book, *Entartung*, which was translated into English in 1895 as *Degeneration*, included a chapter on Wilde (written before the trials) as an example of an "egomaniac" against whom "society must unconditionally defend itself." In this context, the Wilde trials added publicity and legal authority to medical claims that gender deviance implied homosexuality, conceived as a distinct—and diseased—form of identity.

A second, closely related, point about the trials—and one that is crucial to this book—is that news coverage of the Wilde trials made the artist-genius the paradigm of homosexual identity. As quickly as 1897, Havelock Ellis's *Sexual Inversion* credited the publicity over the trials with granting widespread "definiteness and selfconsciousness to the manifestation of homosexuality." Further evidence is provided in E. M. Forster's early novel of homosexual identity, *Maurice* (written around 1910, but not published until after the author's death). When the protagonist first looks for words to describe himself, he says, "I'm an unspeakable of the Oscar Wilde sort." Wilde's status as the first celebrity to publicly—if unwillingly—personify homosexual identity makes him central to the overlapping histories of homosexuality and art because, although Wilde was not a visual artist, his prominence in the British avant-garde contin-

gent known as the Aesthetes linked homosexuality to modern art. During his trials, Wilde's own writings, as well as poems and essays written by his associates or published in the journals he supported, were adduced as evidence for the prosecution. Though Wilde's defenders complained about these tactics, the prosecutors were exploiting strategies Wilde and others had used to achieve avant-garde status by associating new art with distinct sensibilities and ways of life.

Like the Decadents in France, the Aesthetes presented themselves not just as a movement of artists and writers, but as the embodiment of an identity founded, as the name "Aestheticism" implies, on the love of beauty. Wilde's provocative manifestos made beauty their fundamental principle. "Aesthetics are higher than ethics," he proclaimed in "The Critic as Artist": "To discern the beauty of a thing is the finest point to which we can arrive. Even a colour-sense is more important, in the development of the individual, than a sense of right and wrong." Wilde's 1891 novel *The Picture of Dorian Gray* invites comparison with the Decadent precedent of Huysman's *A Rebours*, for both depict men who approach life aesthetically. A passage describing how Dorian Gray was "poisoned" by a French novel that—like Moreau's paintings in Decadent stories—prefigured his own life demonstrates both the attention to visual detail that was a hallmark of Aestheticism and Wilde's reliance on Decadent precedent:

> For years Dorian Gray could not free himself from the influence of this book.... He procured from Paris no less than nine large-paper copies of the first edition, and had them bound in different colours so that they might suit his various moods and the changing fancies of a nature over which he seemed, at times, to have entirely lost control...the whole book seemed to him to contain the story of his own life, written before he had lived it.

In the plot of Wilde's novel, Dorian Gray's true character, sullied by various vices, reveals itself in a portrait that ages and decays while the man retains his youthful beauty. Thus the man literally becomes art, a fusion reinforced by Wilde's emphasis on the look of Gray's clothes and house. Wilde described Gray as infatuated with "Dandyism," a term that originally referred to the elaborate fashions of eighteenth-century male aristocrats, but by the end of the nineteenth century was associated with the daring androgyny of the Aesthetes, most notably Wilde himself (Figure 3.16). Wilde also made Gray a collector of jewels, embroideries, tapestries, and ecclesiastical vestments, all as meticulously described as Gray's home, where

Figure 3.16. Photograph of Oscar Wilde. Photographs like this, taken in New York in 1882 to publicize Wilde's American lecture tour, emphasize the extravagant clothes of the Aesthete or "dandy."

> in a long, latticed room, with a vermillion-and-gold ceiling and walls of olive-green lacquer, he used to give curious concerts in which mad gypsies tore wild music from little zithers, or grave yellow-shawled Tunisians plucked at the strained strings of monstrous lutes, while grinning negroes beat monotonously upon copper drums, and, crouching upon scarlet mats, slim turbaned Indians blew through long pipes of reed or brass, and charmed, or feigned to charm, great hooded snakes and horrible horned adders.

Wilde's description of Gray's life recalls not only the exotic subjects painted by artists like Leighton and Moreau, but also their self-presentation in houses designed for extravagant display. Reinforcing the links between art and identity, Wilde explains, "these treasures, and everything he collected in [Dorian's] lovely house, were to be to him means of forgetfulness, modes by which he could escape . . . from the fear that seemed to him at times too great to be borne," a fear of the impulses that drove him at night to "creep out of the house, go down to dreadful places . . . and stay there day after day," returning to sit before his decaying portrait "sometimes loathing it and himself, but filled, at other times, with that pride of individualism that is half the fascination of sin."

In Wilde's novel, art is crucial to Dorian Gray's sense of himself, goading him to act upon his deepest desires and solacing him with beauty. Such associations between aesthetics and identity were not confined to fiction. Trying to explain himself to his daughter in 1892, the elderly Symonds wrote, "When I was your age, & for a long time after, I contented myself . . . with seeing and admiring people. . . . I now want to love them also." This determination Symonds attached to his identity as an Aesthete: "I love beauty with a passion that burns the more I grow old. I love beauty above virtue, and think that nowhere is beauty more eminent than in young men. This love is what people call aesthetic with me. It has to do with my perceptions through the senses. . . ." Attempting to distinguish between Aesthetic and paternal love, he concluded: "With my soul & heart I love you more than the world. With my aesthetic perceptions I love physical perfection." Sexual implications like those suggested in this carefully worded letter were insinuated—but never made explicit—in reviews of *Dorian Gray* before Wilde's trials. Journalists condemned the book as "unmanly," "effeminate," and of only "medico-legal" interest. In the novel, Dorian Gray's mysterious vices include nonsexual crimes involving drugs and forgery as he ruins the reputations of both men and women. Nevertheless, and despite the fact that Gray rejects—and finally murders—the male artist who might have redeemed him because he offered "a friendship so coloured by romance," the prosecution of Wilde and his writings seemed finally to reveal homosexuality as the secret for which art is the symptom.

Journalists were quick to extrapolate from Wilde to modern art in general: "No sterner rebuke could well have been inflicted on some of

the artistic tendencies of the time than the condemnation of Oscar Wilde," editorialized London's *Daily Telegraph*. It is no exaggeration to say that Aestheticism's association with homosexuality destroyed the movement. As art that had seemed daringly avant-garde became dangerously scandalous, publishing contracts were canceled, and journals that promoted Aestheticism abruptly shifted focus. This was true not only in England but also in Germany, where the influence of sexology was pronounced. Homosexual scandals concerning prominent artists, such as the painter Paul Höcker (1854–1910) and the sculptor and illustrator Sascha Schneider (1870–1927), erupted in the years following the Wilde trials, forcing both artists to immigrate to Italy.

There were long-term effects as well. By linking modern aesthetics to an identity labeled as a pathology both *by* and *of* the literate bourgeoisie, the Wilde trials contributed powerfully to the often-noted rupture at this period between British avant-garde art and progressive class politics (so powerfully that Wilde is often asserted to have been apolitical despite the revolutionary sentiments expressed in writings like his "The Soul of Man Under Socialism"). A second long-term effect of the trials was to make Aestheticism the "look" of homosexuality, and thus a touchstone in the emergence of gay subcultures for decades to come. These effects were directly related to the rising importance of the mass media, which quickly transmitted new ideas to readers worldwide. This chapter, therefore, concludes by analyzing the diffusion of Aestheticism—both its rise to fashion and its rapid relegation to a marginalized sexual subculture—in the influential journals *The Artist* and *The Studio*.

AESTHETES AND ART JOURNALS

The success of the English magazines *The Artist* and *The Studio* reflects the decisive shift of nineteenth-century art away from financial dependence on a few aristocratic patrons and toward a broader population of middle-class collectors, gallery-goers, and amateurs. As their titles imply, *The Artist* and *The Studio* covered both art and design, offering readers vicarious access to artists and their workspaces.

Under the editorship of Charles Kains-Jackson, beginning in 1889, *The Artist* (its full title was *The Artist and Journal of Home Culture)* became a veritable handbook for Aesthetes. The magazine included notices for books of interest (including Wilde's writings), described the activities of artists associated with Aestheticism (which it described in the January 1892 issue as "the latest and most exclusive of English schools, the so-called Decadents"), alerted readers to a performance by "a troupe of Bedouin Arabs, who are not less noticeable for their handsome physique than for the grace with which they go through the performance," and even (in April 1892) explained how to dye carnations green in imitation of Wilde's style. An 1889 article proposed as appropriate subjects for modern paintings, "Hyacinth and Apollo, Narcissus, Plato and Agathon,

Alectryon (a boyfriend of Mars), Tenes (a well-favoured and handsome lad), Iolas (the youthful favorite of Heracles), the Festival of Diana Orthia, which featured the whipping of Spartan youths"—a passage that has been cited as the first published use of "boyfriend" in a homosexual context. In September 1891, John Addington Symonds contributed to *The Artist* a poem beginning:

What is the charm of barren joy?
The well-knit body of a boy
Slender and slim,
Why is it then more wonderful
Than Venus with her white breasts full
And sweet eyes dim?

The Artist, in turn, covered every stage of the writing, publication, and sales of Symonds's *Life of Michelangelo*. "A principal feature of the new *Life* will be a minute examination of Michelangelo's psychology," *The Artist* promised in June 1892, following up in September with the hint that "Mr. Symonds has . . . a surprise in store . . . for believers in the Vittoria Colonna legend in particular" (a reference to Michelangelo's supposed heterosexual love affair). A notice of the published book in November 1892 reported that Symonds had documented "the sculptor's exceedingly pagan love-making anent Messr Tommaso Cavaliere" and a longer review the following month praised Symonds's "virile judgment and exact appreciation of his subject," which "have saved us from any degrading of the severely masculine genius of the great sculptor," concluding that, "the first man of the Renaissance who was also in many ways the first decadent." In the first issue of 1893, *The Artist* announced that Symonds's next book would be a study of Walt Whitman.

Symonds poems were typical of those printed in *The Artist.* Kains-Jackson published his own Aesthetic poetry, some under his own name and others under the pseudonym Philip Castle. Like poems by the French Decadents, these often described particular works of art; but, where the Decadents invoked Moreau's mystical images, Kains-Jackson hymned Henry Scott Tuke's pictures of bathing boys (Figure 3.17). Kains-Jackson's ideas were summed up in the April 1894 issue of *The Artist*, which carried his manifesto on what he called "The New Chivalry." Citing the inspiration of Leighton's paintings of classical youths and their mentors, Kains-Jackson heralded what he claimed was England's long-awaited rediscovery of the "newer and intenser love" between an older and younger man than was ever possible between the sexes.

Ever on the lookout for evidence of the new passion between men, *The Artist* regularly cited other journals in which it detected a sympathetic spirit. In 1893 *The Artist* twice (in March and again in April) welcomed "the new joyously adorned" illustrated journal *The Studio*, edited by one

of its own contributors, Joseph Gleeson White. *The Studio* became the most influential journal of modern British art and design, with subscribers throughout Europe and the anglophone world. The first issues included features on Frederic Leighton and Aubrey Beardsley (1872–98). Six of the eight illustrations in *The Studio*'s article on the clay models Leighton made for his bronze sculptures featured male nudes, including the *Athlete Wrestling a Python* (Figure 3.8). Under the headline "A New Illustrator: Aubrey Beardsley," *The Studio* featured the young artist's proposed illustration for the first English edition of Wilde's play *Salomé*, which had been written in French and published in Paris to avoid censorship. In another example of the Aesthetes' fascination with the French Decadents, Wilde promoted his *Salomé* as inspired by the descriptions in Huysman's *A Rebours* of Moreau's paintings of this biblical tale of lust and luxury. "My Herod is like the Herod of Gustave Moreau, wrapped in his jewels and sorrows," he proclaimed. Thrilled by Beardsley's illustration of an androgynous Salomé passionately kissing the severed head of John the Baptist, Wilde had him commissioned to illustrate the English translation. Although Wilde's publisher rejected several of Beardsley's designs as too licentious, the book created a sensation, and the herm (a type of classical sculpture with a torso mounted on a square pillar) that Beardsley created for its title page became a symbol of the Aesthetes (Figure 3.18).

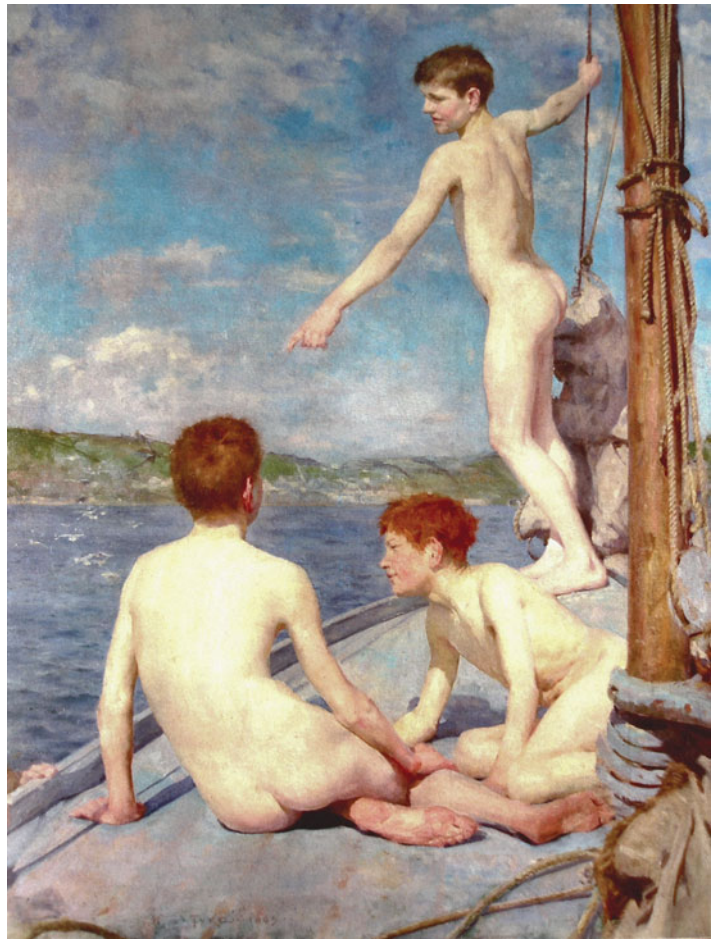

Figure 3.17. Henry Scott Tuke, *Bathers* (1889), oil on canvas, Leeds City Art Gallery. One of Tuke's many pictures of this title inspired Charles Kains-Jackson's sonnet published in *The Artist* in May 1889, which described "the boyish faces free / From care, the beauty and the delicacy / Of young slim frames not yet to labour put."

The most remarkable article in the first year of *The Studio*, however, was "The Nude in Photography: with some studies taken in the open air," which appeared in the third issue (Figure 3.19). This unsigned essay by Gleeson White focused exclusively on the male nude, and was illustrated with photographs by Frederick Rolfe (1860–1913) and Baron Wilhelm von Gloeden (1856–1931). The Englishman Rolfe and the German von Gloeden exemplify northern Europeans' association of

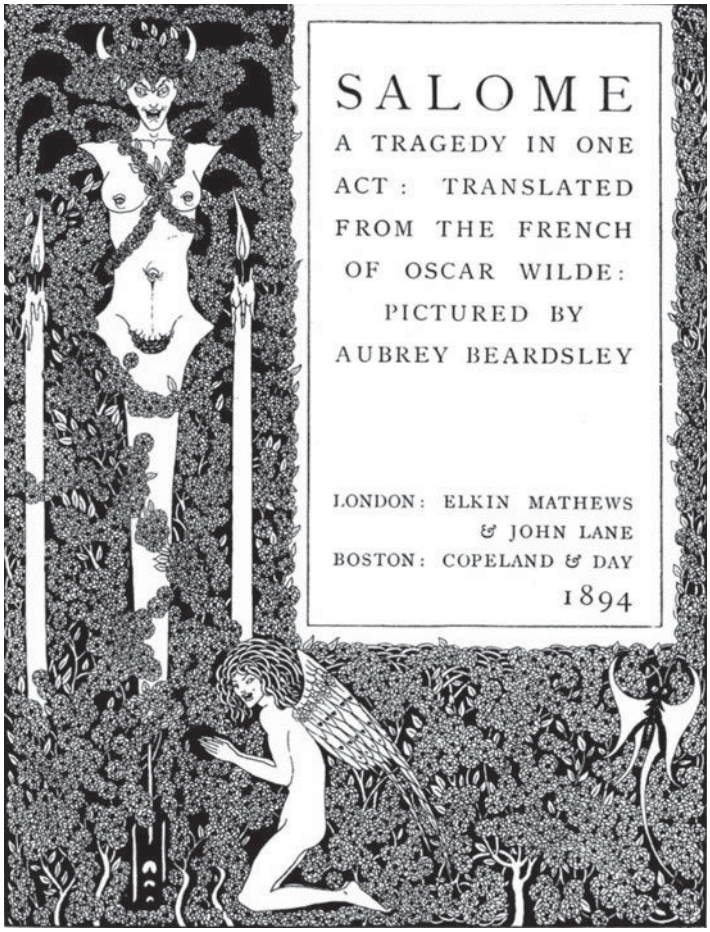

Figure 3.18. Aubrey Beardsley, title page for Oscar Wilde's *Salomé* (1907). Beardsley's animated herm conveys the idea of classical mores coming to life in ways that transgress modern sexual conventions. Beardsley's original design boasted male genitalia erased from the published edition.

homoeroticism with what seemed to them exotic and primitive Mediterranean cultures. Both Rolfe and von Gloeden moved to Italy, Rolfe assuming the Italian aristocratic title of Baron Corvo and von Gloeden the nickname "Baron of Taormina." And both were fascinated by working-class Italians, whom they saw as free from the repressions of Protestantism and bourgeois propriety. Von Gloeden wrote: "Greek forms inspired me, as did the bronze complexion of the descendants of the ancient Hellenes, and I attempted in my images to resurrect the classical life of old." Unlike the painters Leighton and Moreau, these photographers left written records of their homoerotic engagement with the men they depicted. Rolfe's letters detail sexual pleasures (whether experienced or fantasized is impossible to know) with young Italian men. Though von Gloeden's records are more circumspect, he alludes to parties where he and his male models behaved "like wild beasts."

Rolfe's photography augmented his primary career as an author of poems, novels, histories, and folklore. *The Artist* in 1891 published two of his sonnets infused with a blend of erotic and religious fervor inspired by Guido Reni's (1575–1642) painting of St. Sebastian (Figure 3.20). Von Gloeden, on the other hand, was primarily a photographer, a career in which he was prolific and respected. A pioneer in photographic processes, he published his images widely, producing thousands of negatives and countless prints. Von Gloeden worked in Italy and occasionally North Africa, focusing on the inhabitants—male and female, clothed and unclothed—in natural settings (Figure 3.21). His catalogs offered a wide array of photographs for sale, from portrait heads to nudes, mostly Sicilian youths, nude or lightly draped and posed, in von Gloeden's words, "to resurrect ancient Greek life." This blend of the exotic and the erudite attracted a wide range of publishers. The German magazine *Der*

The Nude in Photography

THE NUDE IN PHOTOGRAPHY: WITH SOME STUDIES TAKEN IN THE OPEN AIR.

CONCERNING the abstract question of "The Nude in Art" little need be said here. Civilised peoples, especially the Latin races, have accepted the superlative beauty of the human form as one of the chief elements in the classic ideal of art. It cannot be denied that mediæval thought was opposed to its presentation, nor that in many later periods of Art, the Nude has been shunned; but one may fairly claim that reverence for the beauty of the figure existed even in schools which held its representation for its own sake inadmissible. Some few subjects in Bible story and certain pagan legends, wherein unclothed actors were necessary to depict the subject, have enjoyed a suspiciously wide and lasting popularity. Covered with a garb of sanctity, or dignified by the literature of a past age, in almost every school of painting it has been held within the province of good taste to portray Adam and Eve, Susannah, St. Sebastian, Andromeda, Leander, and other heroes and heroines, sacred and profane, even where a study of the Nude on its own merits was forbidden. Coming to modern times, we find the unwritten law on the subject still kept—at least in England—more rigidly enforced in America, and but slightly relaxed in France. For a picture to be sufficiently conventional for the taste of buyers, the Nude must be very sparingly introduced. Bathers and the nursery toilette have been indeed added of late to the list of allowable subjects for decorous exhibition, and allegorical presentations of abstract personalities, such as "Night" or "Morning" have extended the list of imaginary beings who may appear in public, naked and unashamed; but it is forbidden, as a rule, to depict contemporary humanity seen in the way that, as a matter of fact, it is rarely seen by contemporaries, and in this lies the chief argument of its opponents. Many excellent people have so genuine a dislike to the Nude that, although one regrets their prejudice, and entirely refuses to grant their case even for the sake of argument, yet at the same time it is impossible to doubt their honesty, or to do other than respect their attitude, however mistaken it may be. The subject of Photography from the figure in the studio is not raised here; indeed, it may yet be questioned if it has any very powerful excuse to urge in its favour. That rapidity of record which is the most important feature in the work of the camera in the open air may be as applicable for indoor work, but the circumstances of the case do not impose any peculiar haste. Studio lighting offers less difficult problems to solve, or rather gives more time for their solution; and there the unclothed figure seems to be out of accord with its surroundings, unrelated and artificial. Out of doors, it is obviously more a part of the landscape than figures in costume could be, since it is evident that Nature, the greatest artist, designed human beings, in common with animals, to harmonise with other natural objects.

FROM A PHOTOGRAPH BY BARON CORVO

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Figure 3.19. Page from *The Studio* (June 1893). The lower photograph is credited to Baron Corvo, a.k.a. Frederick Rolfe. Although most of Rolfe's photographs depict Italian men, the model here is Cecil Castle, a cousin and probably lover of Charles Kains-Jackson, the editor of the magazine *The Artist*.

Eigene, which in 1898 evolved from an anarchist journal to the first journal explicitly for homosexuals, published von Gloeden's photographs, but so did *The National Geographic*, which presented them in an October 1916 feature, "Italy, the Gifted Mother of Civilization." In Gleeson White's article in *The Studio*, von Gloeden's photographs were presented as "charts for reference, or working drawings, as it were, for artists" and accompanied by a notation that they represented only a fraction of "the many hundreds of photographs examined for the purpose" of the article, including those "not suitable for general

Figure 3.20. Guido Reni, *St. Sebastian* (1615–16), oil on canvas, Palazzo Rosso, Genoa. One of many versions of this subject by this artist, this one was hymned by Frederick Rolfe, writing as "Corvo," in two sonnets in *The Artist* in June 1891. The second began "A Roman soldier boy, bound to a tree, / His strong arms lifted up for sacrifice, / His gracious form all stripped of earthly guise / Naked, but brave as a young lion can be."

exhibition." *The Studio* helpfully provided the address of a German distributor from whom readers could order their own pictures; both Symonds and Wilde collected his photographs.

Von Gloeden's fusion of erotics and aesthetics not only formed the basis for his own successful career but served as a precursor of gay community, as his Taormina home became a pilgrimage point for men from England and Germany; Wilde, for instance, visited after serving his prison term. Though criticized by some other expatriate Germans in Taormina, von Gloeden was respected by the locals, who in 1911 awarded him a medal for contributing to the community's prosperity. Respect for Von Gloeden stemmed in part from his relationship to his models, whom he treated as collaborators in a quest to revive ancient forms of art and life. Von Gloeden sponsored visits by his models—peasant boys, with no other chance to travel—to museums in Naples, where they saw the ancient Greek and Roman art on which he modeled his pictures. He paid generous royalties to his models on the pictures he sold, and set up some of his assistants as photographers with their own businesses. As late as the 1940s, when Fascist officials seized von Gloeden's negatives as pornography, the resulting trial vindicated the assistant who had inherited the studio, accepting his defense of the images as art. Both the production and the reception of von Gloeden's photography exemplify the extent to which homoerotic images and even experiences could, in some contexts well into the twentieth century, be experienced as class-transcendent aesthetic encounters with the classical past.

The success of this paradigm was also its downfall. The Wilde trials seemed to reveal homosexuality as the secret behind the enigmatic passions of the Aesthetes, tainting the entire movement, all of its products, and even the idea of aesthetic sensitivity. The consequences were immediate for men like Gleeson White, who was forced out as editor of *The Studio*. At *The Artist*, where Kains-Jackson had resigned the year before, allusions to homoeroticism ceased. After a mob incited by the Wilde trials attacked the editorial offices of another Aesthetic journal, *The Yellow Book*, Beardsley was fired as its art editor because of his association with Wilde, though Wilde had never contributed to that journal.

Beardsley's short career makes a particularly instructive case in the effects of the Wilde trials. Because of his links to Wilde and Aestheticism, Beardsley today is often included in lists of homosexual artists. But

though his art and writing undoubtedly reflect the Aesthetes' fascination with sexuality and androgyny, there is no evidence that he was erotically attracted to men (some scholars have suggested that he was in love with his mannish-looking sister, and even that her pregnancy, which miscarried, was a result of their affair). Beardsley was, nevertheless, caught up in the collision of art and homosexuality in the late nineteenth century. Denied respectable publication venues after the Wilde trials, he found work with a publisher who specialized in expensive erotica. There Beardsley was encouraged to turn his Aesthetic fascination with the rare and exotic into explicitly sexual channels, creating the images for which he is today most famous. These playfully inventive and delicate illustrations on bawdy themes may offer the ultimate vindication of the Aesthetes' claims to be able to make even the most unlikely subjects beautiful (Figure 3.22).

In his personal life, too, Beardsley increasingly flouted propriety, displaying erotic Japanese prints in his bedroom at the house he shared with his sister and mother; this shocked even other *shunga* connoisseurs, who veiled such images in bound volumes. The distinctive style of Beardsley's illustration was widely recognized as incorporating the flat patterns of Japanese prints, blending this allusion with references to the linearity of Greek vase paintings. This combination of stylistic citations embodied the Aesthetes' erudite appreciation of art associated with exotic forms of sensuality. But the sexuality evoked by these Japanese and Greek sources (discussed in chapter 1), though far from exclusively heterosexual, is not what is meant by the modern term *homosexual.* Beardsley's appreciation of their polymorphous eroticism is far truer to the spirit of his sources than to the medical binaries of homo- and heterosexual that were being developed in his time.

Figure 3.21. Wilhelm von Gloeden, *Sicilian Youths*, photograph reproduced in *The Studio* (June 1893).

Beardsley died of tuberculosis, at age twenty-five in 1898, too soon to feel the power that these medical conceptions of sexuality exerted in the twentieth century. His example shows how far the Aesthetes' self-understanding was from the scientists' theories. Where some sexologists classed behaviors, including sexual behaviors, into binaries modeled on the two genders, the Aesthetes and Decadents sought to open themselves to the widest possible range of sensations, experiencing everything for its aesthetic potential and transforming it into art. What these late-nineteenth-century artists and the doctors had in common was their

Figure 3.22. Aubrey Beardsley, *The Ambassadors* from *The Lysistrata of Aristophanes* (London: 1896). Beardsley humorously exaggerates the sexual frustration of the Athenian men rebuffed by the women in this Greek play.

belief in personality types. The artists saw their careers not just as a profession but as a way of being. Likewise, for the doctors, homosexuality was not just an erotic attraction to one's own sex; it implied—and, therefore, was diagnosable from—a catalog of personal attributes associated with androgyny. For women, these traits included the supposedly masculine attributes of independence, strength, and professional ambition; for men, homosexuality was signified by a supposedly feminine aesthetic sensitivity and sensuality. The Wilde trials made sensationally public the potential for these ideas to collapse into one another, fusing the type of the artist with the type of the homosexual. This belief would profoundly influence the histories of both art and homosexuality in the twentieth century.

CHAPTER 4

SECRETS AND SUBCULTURES, 1900–1940

THE PRECEDING CHAPTER described how, during the nineteenth century, the identity category "homosexual" emerged in tandem with another new identity: the avant-garde artist. This chapter explores the immediate results of this fusion. The consequences of the association of sexual and artistic identity were profound, so it is important to reiterate that this text is not comprehensive. A complete account of the twentieth-century artists who were or were thought to be homosexual, or who documented aspects of homosexuality in the avant-garde, or who reacted against associations of art and homosexuality by aggressive displays of homophobia or heterosexuality would come close to a chronicle of modern art in its entirety. Rather than claiming comprehensiveness, this chapter offers case studies that reflect broad patterns in the twinned development of art and of homosexuality.

Because the links between art and homosexuality emerged in medical and legal texts, these ideas first affected the educated middle classes. Even for the educated, however, the idea of homosexuality as an identity—rather than a behavior—was slow to take hold. Octave Mirbeau's 1907 travelogue novel *La 628-E8* (the title is the license number of his car) includes a diatribe about the emergence of civil rights groups for homosexuals in Germany, which the French narrator denounces in nationalist terms:

> When we were immoral . . . we were so easily, happily. Those Germans are such tactless tasteless pedants. . . . It's not enough for them to be pederasts like everyone else. . . . They invented *homosexuality*. . . . Where

> will science find itself next?...Now instead of men just having sex with each other as a vice, perfectly simply, they are *homosexuals* and do so with pedantry.

Among academics, records from a typical American university show that administrators' responses to homosexual behavior shifted from moral assessment of acts to diagnosis of personality types only in the 1940s, and then because of the military's adoption of psychological screening for prospective soldiers. By 1947, however, university officials were using phrases like "he can be described as being aesthetic in temperament and somewhat effeminate in speech and manner" to identify homosexual students.

Once the connections between aesthetic sensitivity and homosexuality were established, their effects were far-reaching. The eminent psychiatrist Clements C. Fry, in his studies of soldiers during World War II, found that homosexuality did not make men unfit for military service, and he challenged "the rationality of the rules" that discharged homosexuals, but he also wrote, in his capacity as head of the new "Division of Mental Hygiene" in the health services department at Yale, that "within the university they acted as a magnet, attracting other homosexuals and exercising an influence over those who were not consciously homosexual or whose sex lives were unorganized....They constituted a threat to others." Fry noted that this was a problem especially for "a boy with intellectual and artistic ambitions" who finds "mutual interests among homosexuals." In the 1950s, both Harvard and Yale privileged athletes among the applying students; Harvard rated applicants for their perceived "manliness," lest, in the words of the university's admissions director, their students gain a reputation as "pansies" or "decadent esthetes." In New York in the 1930s, recalled the painter Paul Cadmus, "the word homosexual was never used; they just said, 'He's an artist.' And artists were forgiven a lot." This tolerance did not extend far outside Cadmus's social circles, however. By the 1940s, the heterosexual Robert Motherwell was refused eligibility for military service on the grounds of homosexuality, despite his protestations and the fact that he was married, simply on the evidence that he was a painter and lived in the artist's district of Greenwich Village. By the mid–twentieth century, associations of homosexuality with artists were firmly rooted in middle-class consciousness.

ECHOES OF AESTHETICISM

Because new conceptions of art and homosexuality spread slowly, their relationship during the first decades of the twentieth century often followed nineteenth-century patterns. The career of the publisher and photographer Fred Holland Day (1864–1933) exemplifies the influence of Aestheticism outside England and into the twentieth century. Day was part of a circle of artists and writers in Boston, Massachusetts, who were fascinated by the British Aesthetes. Between 1893 and 1899, his publishing firm, Copeland

and Day, issued American editions of *The Yellow Book* and Wilde's *Salomé* with Beardsley's images as well as illustrated books by Americans working in the Aesthetic style. Like British Aesthetes, Day staged his home as a reflection of his identity, displaying among his art and souvenirs a photograph of Edward Carpenter and a sheet of paper bearing Wilde's autograph tied with a yellow ribbon to the pencil Wilde had used to sign it.

Day's Aesthetic ambitions are evidenced in his meticulous experimentation with photographic papers and processing as he attempted to match the visual richness of painting. He also followed the Aesthetic precedent of *The Studio*'s editor Gleeson White by publishing von Gloeden's photographs in American magazines. Day criticized what he saw as Gleeson White's apologetic commentary, and in 1898 published his more confident manifesto, "Photography Applied to the Undraped Figure," claiming as precedent "the days of the simple purity and beauty of Greek Art, reflected from the purity and beauty of Greek life." Day illustrated his argument with his own photographs of nudes—several, despite the article's title, draped in exotic costume, but all male with the exception of one included as an example "of what not to do" in posing the model. Like von Gloeden and Rolfe, Day used props to invoke the Greco-Roman past in his photographs, extending his references to Mediterranean civilizations to include North African costumes for his black models (Figure 4.1). Also in 1898,

Figure 4.1. F. Holland Day, *An Ethiopian Chief*, as illustrated in his 1898 article "Photography Applied to the Undraped Figure."

Figure 4.2. F. Holland Day, *Study for the Crucifixion* (1898), Library of Congress.

Day courted controversy by exhibiting, as a study for a figure of the crucified Christ, a male nude with visible genitals (Figure 4.2). This misty Christ echoed the pose of *The Dying Slave* by Michelangelo (Figure 2.10), whom Symonds's recent biography had made the exemplar of the fusion of homosexual sensibility with artistic greatness.

Where European photographers traveled to the Mediterranean to find their "primitive" ideal of masculine beauty, however, Day found his models in the thriving black and immigrant neighborhoods of Boston. Like von Gloeden, Day forged long-standing relationships with the men who posed for him, helping J. Alexandre Skeete, the Guyanan immigrant who modeled for *An Ethiopian Chief*, establish his own artistic career. Day's best-known protégé was Kahlil Gibran (1883–1931), who went on to become a celebrated author of mystical-philosophical texts. Gibran was a thirteen-year-old recent immigrant from Lebanon when his art teacher asked Day to assist with the education of this promising student. In addition to photographing Gibran in a hodgepodge of exotic costumes, Day read to him, lent him books, encouraged him to copy from his art collection, involved him in the design of Copeland and Day publications, and later sponsored exhibitions of his drawings. By the time Gibran was twenty-one, he addressed Day as "my brother" in his letters.

Day's relationships with his models are poorly documented and undoubtedly varied in individual cases. His later photographs are frank in their homoerotic themes (Figure 4.3), but it is simplistic to imagine that sex completely explains—or completely corrupts—his intellectual and emotional engagement with Mediterranean cultures. Like Symonds and Carpenter in England, Day was inspired by Whitman's ideals to mingle erotic and altruistic impulses in a complex dynamic that combined substantial financial support for institutions that educated poor immigrants (helping them to become more like him) and his own often-remarked adoption of Arab costume (allowing him to become more like them). Both impulses, however, express Day's identity as an Aesthete who relished and cultivated what the mainstream of his own culture would reject.

Equally complex is Day's series of over 250 Crucifixion photographs, among them the Michelangelesque nude that scandalized Bostonians. Using a remote-controlled camera, Day himself modeled for many of his Crucifixions, growing his hair and beard to look the part of Christ. These images have prompted numerous explanations: his campaign to assert photography's aesthetic status as art by claiming a traditional subject of painting; his grief over Beardsley's recent humiliation and death, which Aesthetes saw as a kind of martyrdom; his admiration for the mysticism of another of his idols, the poet William Butler Yeats; his interest in the intense Catholicism of his close friend, the poet Louise Guiney; his participation in the "secularized religiosity" that characterized the Arts and Crafts Movement at the time; his friendship with the Episcopalian nun who ran Boston's Children's Hospital; and, finally, his participation in what one historian calls "the age-old sexual rituals of trust . . . that it would be crude in this case to call sadomasochistic." That these motives could be intertwined is evidenced by Day's determination to organize a controversial requiem mass in Boston for Beardsley, the Aesthetic illustrator of *Salomé*, Wilde's poetic rendition of biblical torture.

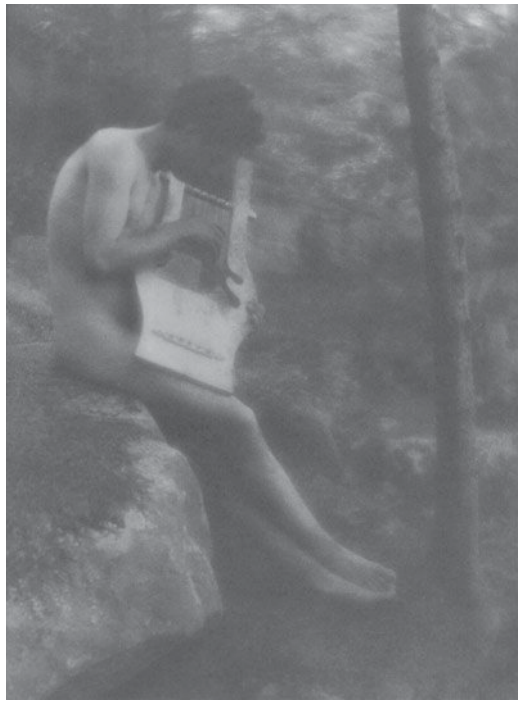


Figure 4.3. F. Holland Day, *Orpheus*, also known as *Nude Youth with Lyre* (1907), Library of Congress. Day's Orpheus series invokes the singer of classical myth, who, bereft of his female lover, turned to the love of boys and was beaten to death by jealous Maenads. This story prompted medieval writers to cite Orpheus as the inventor of pederasty.

Into this mix of elements of Day's fascination with the Crucifixion must be added his identification with Mediterranean culture in general, and with Gibran in particular. Day commissioned Syrian craftsmen to make his cross and nails as authentic as possible and created for his ancillary figures costumes he told reporters were like those "used at the time of the actual crucifixion, and procured from designs furnished by archeological investigation." Gibran, who assumed the voice of Christ in some of his writings, undoubtedly told Day, as he did his other American patrons, how as a boy in Lebanon he stoically endured the painful re-breaking of a poorly healed broken shoulder and the subsequent immobilization of being tied to a cross for the forty days it took to heal. The dramatic story of Gibran's modern-day crucifixion could only have reinforced Day's Aesthetic ideal of the outsider as simultaneously exotic, beautiful, and ennobled by suffering.

Day's photographic reenactments of the biblical Crucifixion exemplify the ways new ideas of minority sexual identity interacted with ethnic, religious, and artistic forms of identity at the turn of the century. Day's Crucifixion pictures drew mixed reviews from American critics, but they were widely attacked when they were exhibited in 1900 in London, where journalists were more attuned to associations between Aestheticism and homosexuality. The *British Journal of Photography*

described Day as "the leader of the Oscar Wilde school," condemning his pictures as a "flagrant offence against good taste."

AVANT-GARDE CONTINGENTS

While Day and his Boston circle demonstrate Aestheticism's lingering global reach, European cities continued to attract artists from around the world to new avant-garde subcultures. Far from the oversight of families at home, foreigners found in European cities communities of outsiders where artistic and sexual nonconformity overlapped. In Paris and Berlin, bars, restaurants, and nightclubs catering to foreigners and the avant-garde became highly visible aspects of these subcultures. Local responses to these businesses ranged from thrilled participation to outraged condemnation, with varying degrees of voyeurism in between. Images of lesbians in Paris nightclubs appear as early as the fin-de-siècle drawings by Henri de Toulouse-Lautrec (1864–1901) and Pablo Picasso's (1881–1973) painting titled (after the name of a notorious nightclub) *Le Moulin de la Galette* (1900). Such sites of commercial sexual display became common in Western cities during the 1920s, when the economic and social upheavals following World War I propelled a wide range of challenges to political and cultural conventions. Young adults, disillusioned by battlefield carnage and home-front economic hardship, flocked to cities where they experimented with radical politics, informal manners, androgynous fashions, and sex. The growth of illustrated magazines during the 1920s offered unprecedented visibility to these urban youth cultures, defining and publicizing new social mores for audiences vastly increased in size and diversity. Fueled by journalistic fascination, episodes like the much-publicized "Pansy Craze" for camp and drag performers in New York nightclubs in the late 1920s magnified the ambivalent dynamics of fascination, horror, and voyeurism that characterized paintings and prints of Paris nightclubs in the 1890s.

Figure 4.4. Jeanne Mammen, *Costume Ball*, published in Curt Moreck, *Führer durch das "lasterhafte" Berlin* (Guide to "wicked" Berlin) (Leipzig: 1931). © 2010 Artists Rights Society (ARS), New York/ADAGP, Paris.

Having lost the war, Germany was particularly hard-hit by the emotional and economic upheavals of the 1920s. Berlin emerged as a center of sexual experimentation with a variegated sex industry that attracted many foreigners. Its clubs for homosexuals and cross-dressers are memorably described in Christopher Isherwood's *Berlin Stories* (which became the basis for the musical and movie *Cabaret*), and were illustrated by numerous artists, including Jeanne Mammen (1890–1976) (Figure 4.4).

Mammen's images appeared in both commercial guides to Berlin's sex clubs and sober studies of contemporary sex culture published by the Institut für Sexualwissenschaft (Institute of Sexology), which was founded in Berlin in 1919 by Magnus Hirschfeld. Paris's thriving commercial sex culture was also illustrated in books and magazines. In 1923, Jean Cocteau (1889–1963) published a book of drawings that included seventeen scenes titled "Le mauvais lieu" (The bad place), depicting bars populated by cross-dressers, same-sex couples, and titillated observers (Figure 4.5). In the 1930s, the Hungarian immigrant Brassaï (born Gyula Halász, 1899–1984) documented the seedy nightclubs, bars, and brothels of Paris in photographs characterized by an elegance and emotional complexity that transcends the pejorative titles and commentary that, to the dismay of his models, accompanied the images when they were published (Figure 4.6).

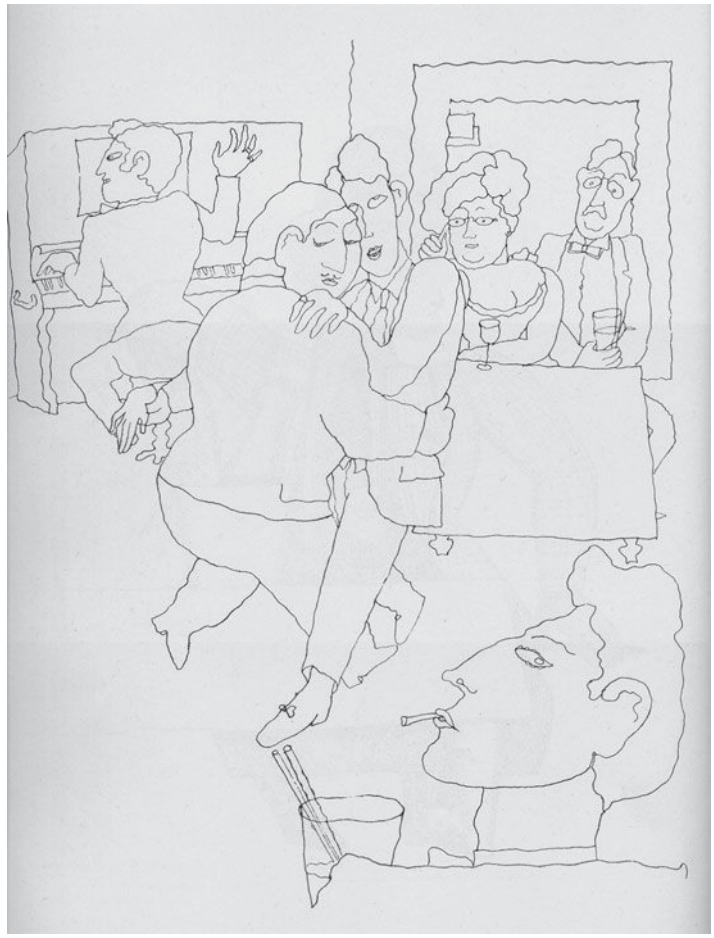


Figure 4.5. Jean Cocteau, "Le mauvais lieu," published in *Dessins* (Paris: Librarie Stock, 1923). © 2010 Artists Rights Society (ARS), New York/ ADAGP, Paris.

In addition to attracting artists as subject matter, communities of sexual outsiders in major European cities in the first decades of the twentieth century influenced the development of modern art in ways less immediately visible, but arguably more lasting. In Paris, prominent avant-garde contingents formed around the charismatic American lesbians Natalie Barney (1876–1972) and Gertrude Stein (1874–1946). Like the "white marmorean flock" of American women in mid-nineteenth-century Rome (discussed in chapter 3), these communities were structured by various identities—sexual, artistic, linguistic, national—that reinforced one another to bind the group's members together and define their dissent from the mainstream. The balance of these elements differed between the groups. Stein's circle was more associated with stylistic innovation and American-ness, while Barney's was more explicitly lesbian and broadly anglophone. These categories overlapped, however, so that the heterosexual American writers clustered around Stein found themselves in homosexual company, while French Aesthetes like Jean

Figure 4.6. Brassaï, *Faux Couple* (The false couple) (1932), published in *Le Paris secret des années 30* (later titled *Fat Claude and her girlfriend at Le Monocle*). © Estate Brassaï-RMN Photo: Jacques Faujour. Photo credit: CNAC/MNAM/Dist. Réunion des Musées Nationaux / Art Resource, NY ART191426. The title given this picture on publication belies the intimacy of this image of two women.

Cocteau were introduced to anglophone audiences through their connections to Barney. It is impossible to isolate the role of sexual identity in creating and sustaining these avant-garde groups, which were crucial to the development of modern art. But that is the point: homosexuality as a form of identity was inextricably linked with the development of avant-garde art in the twentieth century.

Like their slightly older male counterparts in Boston, the women around Natalie Barney followed the precedent of the British Aesthetes. In her autobiography Barney claimed as her "first adventure," at an age when she was "hardly out of diapers," a meeting with Wilde during his American tour. Running across a hotel lobby "to escape a pack of vacationing children," she said, she was plucked from "my terrified course" by Wilde. "I was reassured by his eyes which had sympathetically witnessed my flight, by his hair which was as long as mine, and especially by his voice which swept me into a story." Barney's belief in Aestheticism as a bond among artistic outsiders is encapsulated in this account. Much later, it was rumored that when her father demanded that she marry, she embarked on a romance with Wilde's notorious lover Sir Alfred Douglas. Whatever the truth of this story, her family ultimately allowed her to live unmarried in Paris, where her lovers included Dolly Wilde, Oscar's niece. Acting on an Aesthetic determination to, in her words, "find or found . . . a society composed of all those who seek to focus and improve their lives through an art that can give them pure presence," Barney created a community characterized by all the hallmarks of Aestheticism: eccentric elegance in dress, meticulous interior decor, love of erudite poetry, cultivation of wit, and indulgence in sensations beyond the bounds of conventional morality, including those associated with drugs and homoeroticism.

Barney's circle was distinguished from other Aesthetes by the predominance of women and the concomitant importance of lesbian eroticism to the group's social dynamics and its art. In 1900 Barney published a book

Figure 4.7. Natalie Barney photographed by a friend (1905), private collection. The contrast with Picasso's 1906 portrait of Gertrude Stein (Figure 4.12) exemplifies the different forms of modernism associated with different forms of lesbian identity in the early twentieth century.

of poems on lesbian love, and she and her friends photographed one another cavorting naked in nature (Figure 4.7). With their soft focus, self-consciously artistic poses, and panoramic format that contextualizes the nude as a feature in the landscape, these photographs register the precedents of Aesthetic photography as well as associations of lesbian eroticism with artistic sensitivity. Searching for a specifically lesbian creative heritage, Barney studied Greek in order to read Sappho's poetry in the original. In 1904 she moved briefly to the island of Lesbos with her lover, the poet Renée Vivien (born Pauline Tarn), who had published the first explicitly lesbian translation of Sappho the year before. Two writers in Barney's group produced novels based on their romances with her: Liane de Pougy's 1901 best-seller, *Idylle Saphique,* and Vivien's *A Woman Appeared to Me* (1904). Barney proposed for her own tombstone the epitaph: "She was the friend of men and the lover of women, which for people full of ardor and drive is better than the other way around."

Despite her temporary expatriation to Lesbos, Barney's headquarters remained Paris, "the only city where you can live and express yourself as you please," she said. Barney's Paris home, a seventeenth-century house in an artsy neighborhood on the Left Bank, became, like Leighton's or Moreau's, an expression of identity. Its large garden featured a neoclassical temple inscribed on its pediment "A L'AMITIE" (to friendship).

That *amitié* is a feminine noun made this motto especially appropriate to the rituals honoring female deities that Barney staged as part of her effort to re-create a circle of creative women lovers like the one she believed flourished around Sappho.

Such extravagance attracted journalists' attention. Beginning in 1910, the Decadent writer Rémy de Gourmont cast his introspective biweekly essays in the journal *Mercure de France* as letters to Barney, whom he addressed as "The Amazon," a reference to the female warriors of Greek mythology and slang for women who adopted masculine dress and behavior. "There are male wills in female bodies," Gourmont asserted; "I am relying upon that to reach your essential sympathy." Gourmont used the idea of dialogue between the gender-transcending Amazon and a man who professed to "something feminine in his nervous texture" to speculate about such broad topics as sympathy, pleasure, and chastity (this last included an affirmation of the sexual relationship between the poets Arthur Rimbaud and Paul Verlaine). "I rely greatly on you and on your Amazonian way of looking at things and producing a fresh vision of them," he wrote. Barney published her own essays as *Thoughts of an Amazon* in 1920, and her 1929 memoirs were prefaced with a diagram of her house and garden that mapped all her friends in relation to this extraordinary place. By 1932 Barney's circle was so well known that the Paris humor magazine *Pour Rire* published an insider's account that, describing Sappho as the "Eve of liberated women," announced: "There is no point in looking for Sappho in Mytilene [the major city of Lesbos]. She is an artist. Therefore she moved to Paris."

One literary portrait of Barney contributed significantly to the popular image of the lesbian "type" for much of the twentieth century. Radclyffe Hall's *The Well of Loneliness* (1928) was intended to arouse sympathy for what she called, in a letter to the sexologist Havelock Ellis, "the pitiful plight of inverts." Sexology's influence pervades the novel, beginning in Ellis's preface praising the book's "social and psychological significance" and continuing through references to characters reading Ulrichs and Krafft-Ebing. The plot of the novel follows its central character, Stephen—her masculine name reinforces the idea of "inversion" as an inherent condition instilled by parents who were insufficiently attentive to normative gender roles—as she flees the hostility of her native England for Paris. There she is introduced by an effeminate English author of fashionable plays to a Parisian circle presided over by the Barney-like Valérie Seymour, an Aesthete whose philosophy, according to the Wilde-like guide, is that "in this ugly age one should strive to the top of one's bent after beauty." In contrast to the pathetic images of other male and female "inverts" Hall sketched to arouse readers' sympathy, Seymour stands out as strong and charismatic: "every one felt very normal and brave when they gathered at Valérie Seymour's. There she was, this charming and cultured woman, a kind of lighthouse in a storm swept ocean," who enabled "the poor spluttering victims" of shipwrecked lives to

"strike boldly out for the shore, at the sight of this indestructible creature."

Despite Hall's pleas for sympathy, the reception of *The Well of Loneliness* repeated aspects of the Wilde trials. British courts found the book obscene, not because it described sexual attraction between women, but because it did so, in one judge's words, without presenting these "horrible tendencies" as "in the least degree blameworthy." The conservative *Sunday Express* editorialized against the book, claiming, "Literature has not yet recovered from the harm done it by the Oscar Wilde scandal," and warning, "I would rather give a healthy boy or a healthy girl a phial of prussic acid than this novel. Poison kills the body, but moral poison kills the soul." As with the Wilde trials, the highly publicized prosecution of *The Well of Loneliness* helped disseminate the ideas the authorities claimed to want to suppress. By the time the courts ordered the destruction of the unsold stock, 5,000 copies of *The Well* had already been purchased in Britain. With sales boosted by controversy, the book remained available in France and the United States, where courts rejected attempts to suppress it. Translated into eleven languages, more than a million copies were sold in Hall's lifetime. *The Well of Loneliness* was so well known that it was satirized in novels—Compton Mackenzie's *Extraordinary Women* and Lord Berners's *The Girls of Radcliff Hall* among them—and in a booklet titled *The Sink of Solitude*, where the echoes of Aubrey Beardsley in the style of the illustrations reinforced the connections between lesbianism and Aestheticism (Figure 4.8). This booklet, though it mocked Hall, focused its satiric energy on her self-publicizing persecutors, noting that the sensationalistic attacks on her book meant that "millions of shop, office and mill girls have been led to ask the furtive question: What is Lesbianism?"

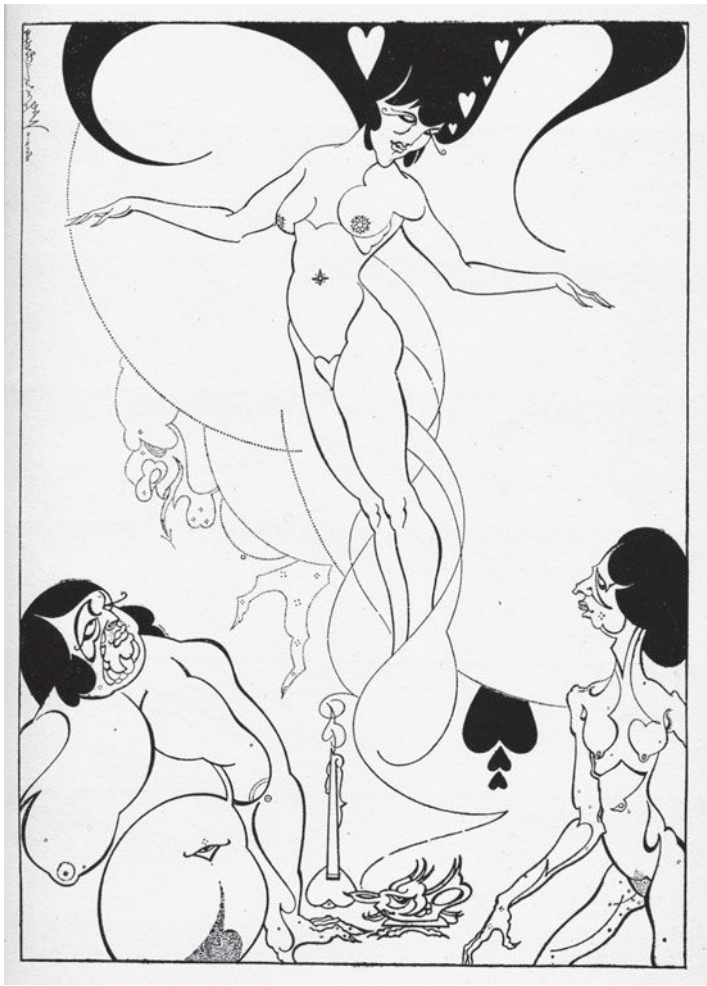


Figure 4.8. Beresford Egan, "St. Stephen in the Lion's Den" and "Sappho and the Latter Day Adolescents," illustrations for *The Sink of Solitude* (London: Hermes Press, 1928).

The ways this question was answered by *The Well of Loneliness*—and by the photographs of Radclyffe Hall that filled the papers during the trial—powerfully conditioned popular perceptions of homosexuality

among women, including its associations with aestheticism and masculine dress. Even the term *lesbian,* which now emerged from the welter of turn-of-the-century medical nomenclature for female homosexuality, reflects the Aesthetes' association of modern sexual identity with a "poetic" sensibility reaching back to Sappho. Scientific texts reinforced connections between Aestheticism and lesbianism; Ellis linked the "congenital anomaly" of lesbianism to "women of high intelligence," and other sexologists associated homosexuality with art. Taking such ideas to heart, the women in Barney's circle developed their talents as writers and artists.

The most prominent visual artist in the group was, like Barney, an American expatriate, the painter Romaine Brooks (1874–1970). Brooks's portraits of the women in Barney's circle supplanted conventional eroticized visions of lesbians (such as Courbet's paintings, discussed in chapter 3) with images of modern lesbian identity. Brooks claimed to dislike *The Well of Loneliness*, but her representations of modern lesbian identity, like Hall's characterization of Stephen, followed sexologists' definitions of the "invert" whose costume and comportment manifest attributes of the opposite gender. In Brooks's 1924 portrait of Hall's lover Una Troubridge, herself an amateur artist, the contrast of the figure's masculine tuxedo-like outfit, monocle, and short hair with her feminine lipstick, earrings, and lapdogs is so extreme that some viewers interpreted it as caricature (Figure 4.9). The harmony of grays, typical of Brooks's art, announces an Aesthetic claim to subtle artistic sensitivity, and critics compared her paintings to the prose of both Proust and Wilde. Although this painting was exhibited in New York and Paris in 1925, it was refused in London, where Troubridge's notoriety for leaving her aristocratic husband for Radclyffe Hall heightened the image's provocative impact. Brooks herself wrote about it to Barney: "Una is funny to paint. Her get-up is remarkable. She will . . . cause future generations to

smile." Like Brooks's dismissal of *The Well of Loneliness*, however, such comments are risky to accept at face value, for part of the Aesthetic stance was to remain wittily aloof from earnest self-revelation, and Troubridge's androgynous outfit and hairstyle resemble Brooks's own.

Sexology's influence on Barney's circle of well-read women is also evident in the work of Djuna Barnes (1892–1982). Barnes, another American, began her career as a journalist and illustrator proficient in a variety of styles. Before moving to Paris around 1920, she produced a pamphlet of poems, *The Book of Repulsive Women*, with pictures imitating Beardsley's style and poems describing fantastical half-breeds who blur boundaries between races and between humans and animals in ways analogous to the sexologists' descriptions of homosexuals as blurring boundaries between the biological categories of male and female. Barnes's 1928 booklet, *The Ladies Almanack*, was a ribald gift to her newfound community in Paris, satirizing the prose and pictures in old almanacs to caricature the women in Barnes's circle (Figure 4.10). Una Troubridge was Lady Buck-and-balk, who "sported a Monocle and believed in Spirits," while Barney was Evangeline Musset, who "had been developed in the Womb of her most gentle Mother to be a Boy, when therefore, she came forth an Inch or so less of this, she paid no Heed to the Error." This manlike woman "was in her Heart one Grand Red Cross for the Pursuance, the Relief and the Distraction, of such Girls as in the Hinder Parts, and their Fore Parts, and in whatsoever Parts did suffer them most."

Figure 4.9. Romaine Brooks, *Una, Lady Troubridge* (1924), oil on canvas, Smithsonian American Art Museum. Photo credit: Smithsonian American Art Museum, Washington, DC/Art Resource, NY.

Barnes's clever *Almanack*, anonymously published in a very small edition, was hardly known outside her circle. Her success came with a 1936 novel, *Nightwood*, which was loosely based on her unhappy affair with the artist Thelma Wood and drew heavily on her experiences among the expatriate lesbians in Paris. Eschewing the proselytizing earnestness of *The Well of Loneliness* in favor of an avant-garde prose style, *Nightwood* piqued the reading public's fascination with lesbian subculture without challenging expectations that lesbians must suffer. This combination made Barnes a famous writer, and after *Nightwood* she produced very little visual art. A portrait from the 1940s, however, suggests that she did not lose her taste for satire (Figure 4.11). Cordelia Coker Pearson Pearson fell in love with Barnes after reading *Nightwood* and commissioned the portrait in order to meet her. Like Brooks, Barnes professed annoyance at her sitter, mocking this female dandy's determination to be painted in masculine riding clothes, and the

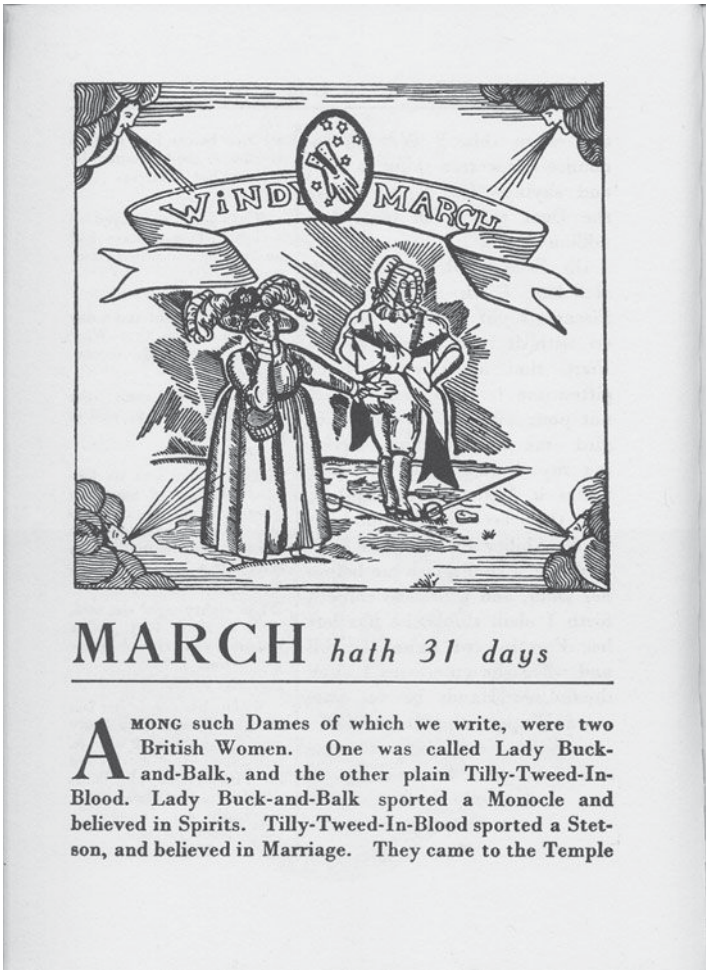


Figure 4.10. Djuna Barnes, page from the *Ladies Almanack* (1928). This page, opening the section on the month of March, illustrates the Good Dame Musset's proposal that women who violate the honor of their female lovers might be summoned to fight duels: "A strong Gauntlet struck lightly athwart the Buttock would bring her to the common Green, where with Rapier or Fowling-Piece, she might demand to take her Satisfaction."

portrait, in which a huge head contrasts with spindly legs and tiny bowler hat, veers strongly toward caricature. As with Brooks, however, Barnes's professions of contempt or amusement protected the artist from imputations of identification with her provocative sitter or with the community of sexual outsiders Pearson represented.

Overlapping with—but distinct from—Barney's band of Aesthetes, another circle in the Paris avant-garde revolved around another American lesbian, Gertrude Stein. Stein lived near Barney and the two were friendly rivals. While Barney's circle embraced a lesbian identity associated with fin-de-siècle Aestheticism, however, Stein was the center of a group composed primarily of heterosexual men on the cutting edge of modernist art and literature. Because Stein favored modernist abstraction over Aestheticism, critics sometimes minimize the importance of homosexuality on her work. Stein's writing pioneered modernism's abstract, fractured prose styles; her parties brought together the leaders of the French and American avant-gardes; and her patronage was crucial to many struggling artists, including both Pablo Picasso and Henri Matisse. All of these accomplishments were influenced in important ways by her sexual identity.

Like the expatriate women in Barney's community, Stein moved to Paris to escape what she experienced as the stultifying sexual norms of middle-class femininity in America. "It was not what France gave you but what it did not take away from you that was important," she said. Also like the women in Barney's circle, Stein was well versed in sexology, having studied psychology in college and trained for a time as a doctor. Stein's application of the new medical theories of sexuality differed from Barney's, however. Where Barney allied herself with lesbians, Stein identified herself with men, cutting her hair short and leaving her "wife," Alice B. Toklas, to oversee the housework and socialize with other artists' wives and girlfriends. "Pablo and Matisse

have a maleness that belongs to genius," Stein wrote. "Moi aussi [me too], perhaps." Picasso's 1905–06 portrait of Stein is anomalous among his images of women for its emphasis on her physical mass and intellectual power, both associated in his art with men (Figure 4.12). For Stein, this was "the only reproduction of me which is always I, for me." She noted happily that she grew more closely to resemble the portrait as she aged.

Despite their differences, Stein's model of lesbian identity, like Barney's, exerted a powerful influence on the women in her circle, prominent among them two American art collectors, the Cone sisters, Etta (1870–1949) and Claribel (1864–1929). Etta's diaries imply an early romance with Stein, and her letters to Stein frankly discuss her attraction to women. Many contemporaries, however, saw Stein as closer to the intellectual Claribel, a friend from medical school who became a prominent medical researcher and administrator. So close was their identification that Stein's 1912 essay *Two Women*, nominally a word portrait of the Cone sisters, is often read as describing Stein's own relationship with Toklas (Text 4.1).

The Cones collected in a style and on a scale that rivaled Wilde's fictional Dorian Gray, filling their adjoining apartments in Baltimore with

Figure 4.11. Djuna Barnes. Portrait of Cordelia Coker Pearson (1947), location of original unknown, photograph in the Papers of Djuna Barnes, Special Collections, University of Maryland Libraries.

THE FINAL PARAGRAPHS FROM GERTRUDE STEIN'S *TWO WOMEN*, WRITTEN 1908–1912, PUBLISHED IN 1925

They were together and they were both being living then. They were not together and they were both being living then. The older was being living then. The younger was going on being living then.

The younger one was always remembering that they were both being living. The older was not ever forgetting that they were both being living. The younger was knowing that the older was being living, was knowing that she herself was needing going on being living. The older was knowing that the younger was going on being living, that she was needing this thing, she was knowing that she herself was being living.

Figure 4.12. Pablo Picasso, *Gertrude Stein* (1907), oil on canvas, The Metropolitan Museum of Art, Bequest of Gertrude Stein, 1946. Painting © 2010 Artists Rights Society (ARS), New York/ADAGP, Paris. Image © The Metropolitan Museum of Art.

lace, embroidery, exotic textiles, and ornaments of silver and gold. Under Stein's guidance, this environment became the setting for a collection of modern French art that is often noted as one of America's finest (Figures 4.13, 4.14). What is not noted about the Cone collection is how their selections of art by Matisse, Picasso, Gauguin, and Renoir focused on images of women. Female nudes, women in fashionable clothes, and a remarkable series of ten Matisse drawings of the strong-jawed sisters (strikingly resembling Picasso's earlier portrait of Stein) combined to suggest a spectrum of possibilities for modern womanhood, from the sensual "primitive" to the fashionable lady or the serious intellectual.

For the Cones, collecting was an expression of identity. Bearing the signs of exoticism on their own bodies, they wore items from their collection—Asian and North African textiles and jewelry—to social events in their home city of Baltimore. Their collection was also a pedagogical resource; they opened their home to scholars, lectured on modern art, and lent work to museums. Promoting the modernism revealed to them by their friend Gertrude Stein was not simply an aesthetic preference for the Cones. It was connected to new ways to think about women, issues like "philanthropy and women suffrage—questions that have put old Baltimore in a state of real turmoil," as Etta wrote to Stein. Claribel's will directed her sister to donate her collection to the Baltimore museum "in the event the spirit of appreciation of modern art in Baltimore becomes improved."

Like the Cones' collection begun under her auspices, Gertrude Stein's work is conventionally studied as an expression of modernism rather than of sexual identity. This is a false distinction, however, for lesbian identity was modern; the remarkable number of expatriate anglophone women in the early-twentieth-century Parisian avant-garde attests to how the identities of the modernist and the lesbian were intertwined. Lesbianism was also crucial to the development of Stein's modernist prose. Her first novel, *Q.E.D.*, written immediately after she arrived in Paris in 1903, was a stylistically conventional story about a love triangle among women very much like a frustrated affair that had prompted Stein to leave America. Each woman in Stein's novel represents a variation of lesbian identity: the "English handsome girl," her older aristocratic-seeming lover, and a sensible middle-class young lady much like herself. Not daring to publish this frank narrative, which included quotations from her own letters, Stein diverted her interest in outsider identity toward African-Americans. Her short novel *Melanctha*, written while Picasso was painting her portrait in 1905–1906 but not published until

Figure 4.13. Claribel Cone's apartment, photographed in 1941 by Mitro Hood. Dr. Claribel and Miss Etta Cone Papers, Archives and Manuscripts Collections, The Baltimore Museum of Art (CEHOMES.19). This view shows four of Matisse's ten drawings of the sisters surrounding Félix Vallotton's 1907 portrait of Gertrude Stein, similar to Picasso's portrait from the same era.

1909, recasts the plot of *Q.E.D.*, heterosexualizing the love affair and setting it in the African-American community. Stein's evocation of black American speech presages the repeating, elliptical patterns that came to characterize her modernist prose style, rooting it in an exotic primitivism often compared to Picasso's borrowings from African masks, but also related—and this is never noted—to the Aesthetes' identification with outsider cultures.

SEXUALITY AND RACE

The relationship between minority racial and sexual identities were—and are—controversial in assessments of modernism, especially in the American context, where the same cities that fostered communities of avant-garde artists were also home to large populations of recent immigrants and racial minorities. The paradigmatic site of interaction between these groups was New York, where in the 1920s avant-garde whites flocked to nightclubs in Harlem, while black intellectuals experimented with modernist styles of prose and visual art, creating the "Harlem Renaissance." This rich mixture produced some of the definitive

Figure 4.14. Etta Cone's apartment, photographed after 1936, Dr. Claribel and Miss Etta Cone Papers, Archives and Manuscripts Collections, The Baltimore Museum of Art (CH.25). This view shows two paintings of fashionable women and a sculpture of a reclining female nude, all by Matisse.

art of the twentieth century (jazz especially), some remarkable acts of interracial collaboration, some blatant acts of exploitation, and a great deal of controversy—all of which historians continue to debate today. For white avant-gardes in the twentieth century, black cultures replaced Mediterranean cultures as the locus of the "primitive," simultaneously exotic and alluring, frightening and inferior. To white eyes (and ears), the black culture visible in Harlem nightclubs seemed to allow a spectacular freedom of self-expression. Radio broadcasts from the Cotton Club and illustrations in mass-circulation magazines like *Vanity Fair* created audiences for the risqué looks and sounds of Harlem far beyond New York. Cross-dressing and other forms of gender-bending display were part of Harlem's appeal, culminating each year in a drag show known as the "Faggot's Ball," which was the largest event of its kind in New York in the twenties. One history of the Harlem Renaissance concludes that the "identification and feeling of kinship" white homosexuals found with blacks provided "the beginnings of homosexual 'minority consciousness.'"

Black communities responded ambivalently to the white avant-garde's attention. On one hand, it offered African-Americans unprecedented opportunities for respect and remuneration. Black political organizations sponsored art exhibitions and awards to encourage and publicize black artists. Black political leaders resisting stereotypes of blacks as uninhibited and instinctual, however, condemned art that seemed to justify such ideas, and were especially critical of blacks who joined homosexual networks in the white avant-garde. One black newspaper warned against consorting with white homosexuals: "The discarded froth of Caucasian society cannot lift them or their race in the respect and confidence of the Caucasian world." Recent surveys of African-American art often perpetuate this attitude, ignoring issues of sexual identity in the careers of leading Harlem Renaissance artists, such as the sculptor Richmond Barthé, whose sensual

Benga figure, suggestive of both African ritual and modern dance, capitalizes on modernists' associations of black culture with artistic and sexual self-expression (Figure 4.15). Many of the black singers, dancers, writers, and artists who created the Harlem Renaissance, however, flouted the politicians' warnings, forging homosexual networks and using sexual deviance to gain the attention of white audiences. After the singer Ma Rainey was arrested in 1925 for throwing a women's party with a strip show by her backup singers, she advertised her "Prove It on Me Blues" with a picture of a woman in masculine dress flirting with two flappers under a policeman's watchful eye. Richard Bruce Nugent (1906–1987), an author and illustrator, provoked black politicians in 1926 with his "Smoke, Lilies and Jade," a prose poem comparing the narrator's attraction to a man and a woman in the artistic milieu of the Harlem Renaissance. An illustration Nugent painted to accompany this story (Figure 4.16) evokes Cocteau's style. Unpublished until recently, it was owned by Alain Locke, who was publicly one of the intellectual leaders of the Harlem Renaissance and, far more discreetly, a member of Harlem's homosexual networks.

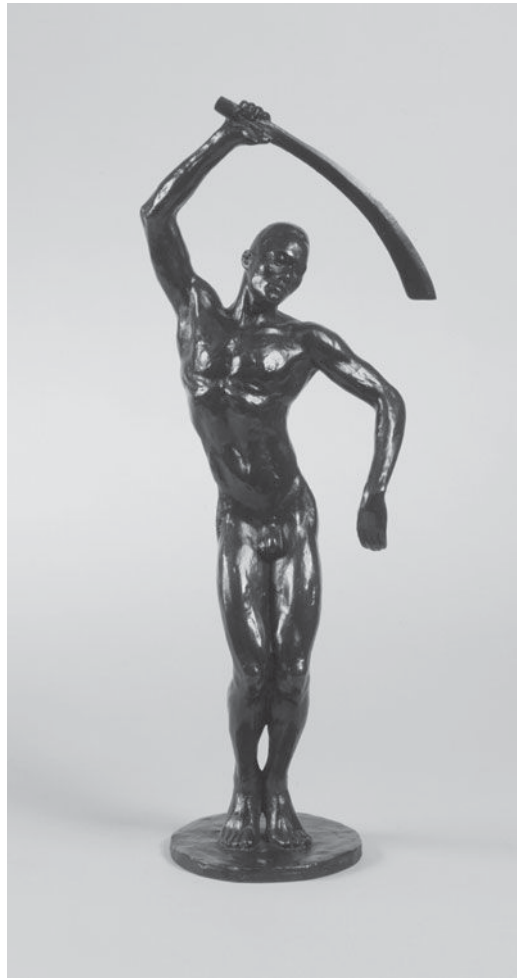


Figure 4.15. Richmond Barthé, *Benga: Dance Figure* (1935), bronze. Newark Museum, Newark, N.J. Photo credit: The Newark Museum / Art Resource, NY.

Despite the exoticizing assumptions of white audiences, the sexual and artistic mores of the Harlem Renaissance did not develop independent of the history sketched in this book. Black writers often invoked Aesthetic precedent in their fusion of artistic and sexual experimentation. Nugent, describing the narrator's desire to kiss the man he calls Beauty in "Smoke, Lilies and Jade," wrote, "Alex wondered why he always thought of that passage from Wilde's *Salomé*. . . when he looked at Beauty's lips" (ellipsis in original). Nugent later produced a series of illustrations for *Salomé*. Locke registered the continuing importance of nineteenth-century models of sexual identity when he criticized Nugent's aestheticism, saying, "Whitman would have been a better point of support than . . . Wilde and Beardsley." In his 1932 novel *Infants of the Spring*, Wallace Thurman, who shared rooms with Nugent, presented a bitter view of Harlem's black artists and white patrons, with Nugent thinly veiled as the character Paul Arbian, a painter of "nothing but highly colored phalli," who commits suicide in the last chapter. The continuing importance of Aesthetic precedent is clear in the suicide scene, where Arbian's blood obliterates the manuscript of the novel he had been struggling to write, leaving only the dedication, which reads:

To Huysmans' Des Esseintes and Oscar Wilde
Ecstatic spirits with whom I Cohabit
And whose golden spore of decadent pollen
I shall broadcast and fertilize.

Stigmas still attached to homosexuality have prolonged debates over the interaction of racial and sexual identity in the early twentieth century, as long-suppressed information gradually emerges to challenge accepted historical accounts. Thurman, despite substantial evidence (including a police record) to the contrary, vehemently denied his homosexuality. Perhaps the most controversial case, however, concerns Carl Van Vechten (1880–1964), a white author and photographer well known for promoting American modernists, Romaine Brooks and Gertrude Stein among them. Van Vechten was famous—and, as the century progressed, increasingly admired—for supporting African-American writers, musicians, and artists, many of whom he photographed as dignified intellectuals. These portraits differed strongly from the demeaning racial stereotypes prevalent at mid-century, and circulated widely in magazines, especially during and after the civil rights movement. Van Vechten's commitment to breaking down racial boundaries in the United States is clear in the disposition of his archives. Art historian Jonathan Weinberg points out that Van Vechten left his substantial collection of African-American literature to Yale University "because it was a white Ivy League institution, while he gave his collection of music, made up mostly of material by and about white composers, to Fiske University, a black college. The idea was for whites to study black culture and blacks to study white culture." When, twenty-five years after Van Vechten's death, part of his Yale archives were opened to the public, historians were forced to confront how deeply this happily married, socially prominent figure actively participated in networks of homosexual dancers and other performers. For some, Van Vechten's frank letters, bawdy scrapbook collages (Figure 4.17), and photographs staging black and white nude men in scenarios ranging from worship to violence (Figure 4.18), discredit the motives and meanings of his support for black artists and intellectuals. For others, these documents offer an affirmative record of erotic and emotional ties between black and white men in a circle of ambitious modernists in mid-century New York.

Figure 4.16. Richard Bruce Nugent, *Smoke, Lilies, and Jade* (1926), Howard University Gallery of Art.

Like Fred Holland Day's Aestheticism, Van Vechten's identifications with modern art and with nonwhite artists relate in complex ways to

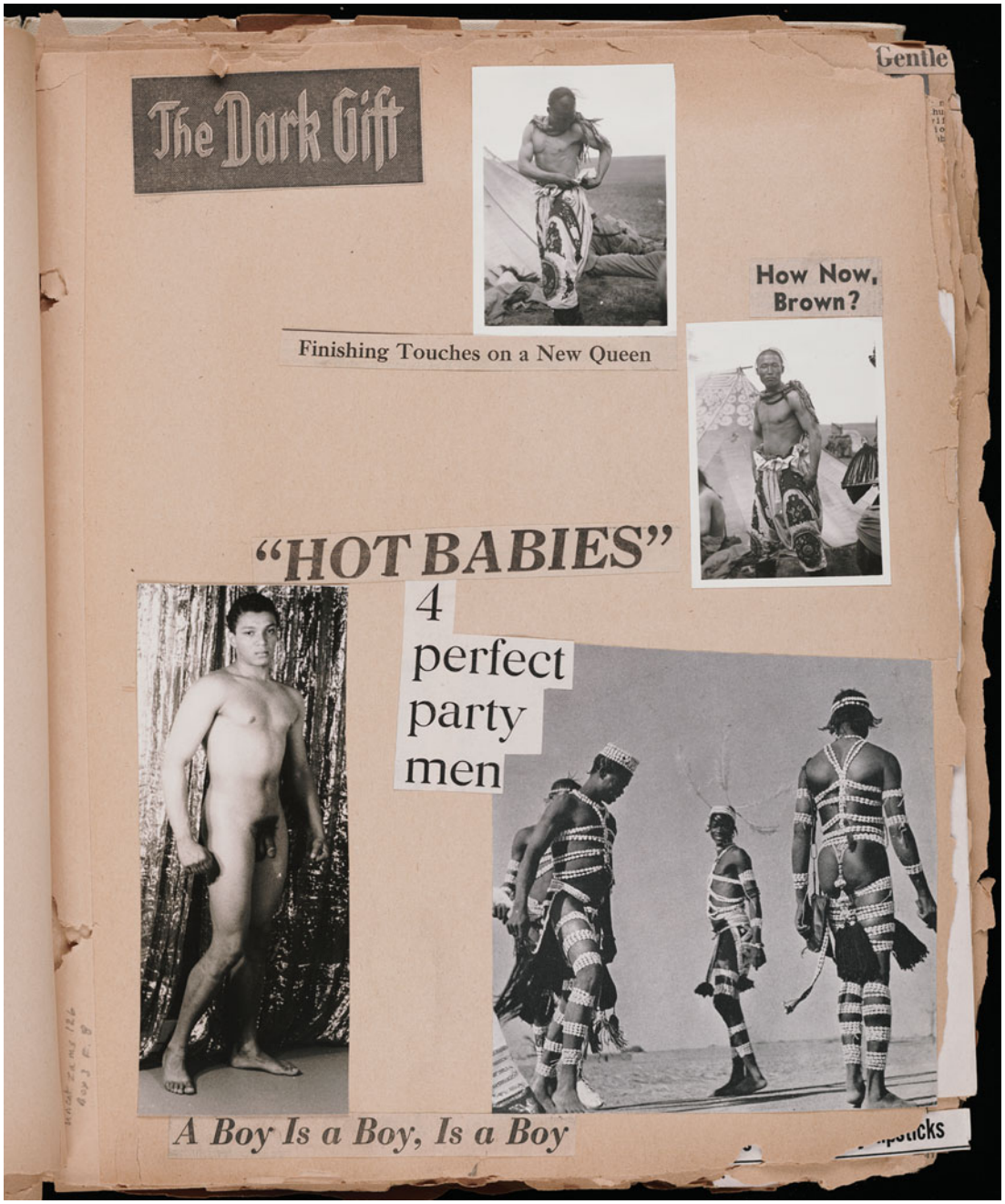


Figure 4.17. Page from Carl van Vechten's scrapbooks, Yale Collection of American Literature, Beinecke Rare Book and Manuscript Library, Yale University, © Estate of Carl Van Vechten.

Figure 4.18. Carl Van Vechten, untitled photograph of Hugh Laing and Allen "Juante" Meadows (c. 1940), Yale Collection of American Literature, Beinecke Rare Book and Manuscript Library, Yale University, © Estate of Carl Van Vechten. The tinselly theatrical backdrop suggests a metaphorical or symbolic meaning for the men's stance, poised between combat and embrace.

issues of sexual identity. How viewers today assess their legacy—and the broader issues of primitivism and sexual identity in the history of modernism—will reflect our own priorities and identifications. On one hand, white modernists like Van Vechten (and Stein and Picasso) clearly appropriated black styles—which they perceived as new, energetic, and sensual—for their own benefit. On the other, their interest in black culture—manifest in the financial and critical support Van Vechten and others gave individual black artists—helped to power the Harlem Renaissance and inaugurate a widespread appreciation of African art. Similarly, the potential for exploitation in sexual relationships between whites and blacks should be balanced against the support offered by the predominantly white homosexual networks of Greenwich Village to blacks whose sexuality alienated them from Harlem's political leadership. At least occasionally, some inkling of Carpenter's and Whitman's belief that homoerotic attraction could overcome barriers between classes and races seems to have been realized in the rich social and aesthetic ferment of New York between the wars. Recently, the African-American scholar James Smalls has analyzed the potential for empowerment he finds in Van Vechten's erotic violation of racial and sexual taboos, insisting, "This is not a form of self-hatred or internalized racism, but represents one way in which the black man can use for empowerment a fantasy that may or may not be his own."

STRATEGIES OF CODING: ABSTRACTION AND SYMBOLS

If the ongoing debates over homoeroticism in the Harlem Renaissance reflect unresolved anxieties over the relationship of racial and sexual identity to one another and to the history of modernism, at least these issues are now openly debated. This is less true in histories of abstraction, often considered the hallmark of modern art. Although the

development of abstraction is tightly bound to the history of homosexuality, these connections are often suppressed.

"Pablo is doing abstract portraits in painting. I am trying to do abstract portraits in my medium, *words*," Gertrude Stein proclaimed. While—or because—Stein's prose style was famous during her lifetime, proscriptions against the too-frank association of the avant-garde with homosexuality meant neither she nor her work was ever publicly associated with lesbianism—this despite her account of her domestic partnership in her 1933 book, *The Autobiography of Alice B. Toklas*, which was much discussed as a memoir of Paris art circles. Since Stein's death, however, her prose style has been analyzed as an expression of lesbianism. Stein's grammar and syntax flout conventional rules, breaking up words' "sleepy, family habits," as poet Edith Sitwell put it as early as 1925. Critics today extend the implications of this observation, noting how Stein groups words in ways that break laws (of grammar) and challenge conventions, often with sexual connotations. From this perspective, Stein's "abstract" prose can be analyzed as a code that let her explore forbidden subjects too forthrightly revealed in her early unpublished texts. Natalie Barney, in a foreword to a posthumously published collection of Stein's writings, invited readers "into Miss Stein's game of blindman's buff, or blindman's bluff, in which the reader is blindfolded—obscurity being the better part of discretion as to who is who."

The visual art produced in Stein's circle also deals with codes. Picasso's abstract paintings, for instance, often include coded references to various girlfriends, which scholars and journalists eagerly explained. Their reluctance to conduct such analysis concerning gay and lesbian artists reflects anxieties that modern art is diminished by association with homosexuality, or that the artists will be reduced to a single stereotype or seen as completely motivated—and thus explained—by their sexual identity in ways that do not threaten heterosexual figures like Picasso. This dynamic affects not only histories of individual artists, but studies of abstraction in general. The idea—radical in the early twentieth century—that art need not mimic the look of a single scene witnessed at a single instant from a single point of view appealed to many artists for many reasons. Some expatriate artists' experience of linguistic difference attuned them to the visual arbitrariness of textual signification. Other artists were attracted to abstraction as a way of representing new ideas, such as scientific theories of a fourth dimension or emotional states associated with color. One important—but underexamined—aspect of the history of modernism is the relationship between abstraction and the coding of sexual identity.

An interest in coded communication animated many of the modernists in Stein's circle, among them the painter Marsden Hartley (1877–1943). On his first visit to Stein's home in 1912, Hartley admired her collection of cubist paintings, which he sketched in letters that reveal his fascination with Picasso's use of symbols: "names of people and words

like jolie or bien and numbers like 75." Hartley's memoirs recall that the first sight of this art made him feel "like a severed head living of itself by mystical excitation" and speculate that "maybe Gertrude lived by disembodiedness." Hartley's description links the idea of codes with an ability to transcend bodies that, for both him and for Stein, were encumbered with stigmatized sexual desires. This suggestion is buttressed by the paintings Hartley made under the influence of Stein and cubism: a series of abstract "portraits of moments" using invented symbols. Hartley gleefully reported that Stein praised his abstractions as more advanced than Picasso's in their use of color and, more importantly, that Picasso himself "said to Gertrude that he could not understand it . . . pointed to it and said 'Where are the eyes and the nose' etc."

Hartley's success in constructing codes that escaped embodiment and baffled even sophisticated viewers informed his next paintings: abstract portraits of a German army lieutenant he met in Paris, who became, in Hartley's words, "the one idol of my imaginative life" (Figure 4.18). In 1913, Hartley followed his idol to Berlin, where his fascination expanded to a love of the capital's military display. His memoirs recall the "sexual immensity" of the spectacle of the imperial guards dressed in "white leather breeches skin tight." Hartley's letters of this time exude admiration for both Germany's "masculine ruggedness and vitality" and his friend, a "true representative of all that is lovely and splendid in the German soul and character . . . this fellow at the age of 24 perfectly equipped for a life of joy and strength and beauty." This was written just after Hartley's lieutenant was killed, early in World War I. Hartley responded to this trauma with a series of abstract paintings combining details from German military uniforms with his own and his beloved's initials. Exhibited in New York in 1916, these paintings aroused controversy for seeming pro-German. Recoiling from this controversy, Hartley asserted his neutrality and refused to explain his abstractions, saying, "There is no symbolism whatsoever in them," and "Pictures that I exhibit are without titles and without description. They describe themselves."

Hartley remained fascinated, however, with ideas of coding and symbolism. His 1921 essay titled "Dissertation on Modern Painting" asserted, "Symbolism can never quite be evaded in any work of art because every form and movement that we make symbolizes a condition in ourselves." By this principle, both symbols and abstract marks are expressions of identity. In recent years, art historians have used memoirs to decode personal references—initials, numbers, military insignia, etc.—in his portraits (although some of his paintings remain enigmatic). It might be argued, however, that this project to restore these images' status as portraits misses what is most important about them: that Hartley's Berlin paintings turned to abstraction in order to announce his love in a language at once disembodied and indecipherable.

As a strategy to express a stigmatized sexual identity, abstraction offered an alternative to the alienation of the Aesthetes. The Aesthetic

style—ironic, witty, elegantly aloof—distanced artists from the figures they depicted. Proust, for example, said of the homosexual characters in his novels, "You can tell anything, but on the condition that you never say: *I*." In contrast to the Aesthetes' stylistic suggestion of refined indifference toward what they depict clearly, Hartley's exuberant colors, vigorous paint strokes, and frontal presentation convey a sincere personal commitment to his images, but his code makes it unclear what they depict. Stein's interest in Hartley's coded abstractions is registered by the prominence of a character named "M—N H—" (itself a relatively simple code) in an experimental 1913 play that anticipates the un-narrated style of much of her later writing. M—N H—'s opening line is "A cook. A cook can see. Pointedly in uniform, exertion in a medium. A cook can see." This far more complex code cannot be definitively deciphered, though its elements—a determination to see, seeing or making points by uniforms, exerting oneself through a medium whether paint or code—all relate to Hartley's art. In sharp contrast to Proust's admonition against seeming to identify with what one depicts by saying *I*, Stein titled her abstract play "IIIIIIIII," and Hartley published the M—N H— speeches in the catalog to his New York exhibition in 1914. In this sense, Hartley's abstractions and Brooks's Aestheticism exemplify opposite end points—his obscure, hers aloof—in the spectrum of artistic depictions of homosexual identity in the first decades of the twentieth century.

If Brooks and Hartley represent end points on this spectrum, many other artists could be located in between. Charles Demuth (1883–1935), for example, was part of Stein's Paris circle of expatriate Americans, and he became close friends with Hartley. His own art and identity, however, remained closer to Aestheticism than to modernist abstraction. Hartley described Demuth as an Aesthete, citing his "quaint, incisive sort of wit with an ultrasophisticated, post eighteen-ninety touch to it" and "wistful comprehension of what many a too tender soul has called infectious sin." Demuth admired both Wilde and Huysmans, and tried unsuccessfully to meet Proust. Many of his early watercolors illustrate erotic episodes from nineteenth-century novels, focusing on heterosexual trauma or debauchery. These meticulously elegant illustrations of scenes imagined by other men follow Aesthetic conventions by denying too close an identification between the artist and his subject matter.

Though Demuth never adopted the brushily earnest self-presentation of Hartley's abstractions, he too was fascinated by the way visual codes simultaneously express and veil their meanings. A group of paintings Demuth called "posters" (even this nomenclature is a kind of a code, masking their status as unique paintings) were recognized by reviewers when they were first exhibited in the 1920s as rendered "in a code for which we have not the key." Like Hartley's paintings, Demuth's "posters" aspired to disembodiedness, for these portraits used symbols to evoke their subjects. Demuth's poster portraits depict painters and writers in his avant-garde circle in New York, with one exception: a

Figure 4.20. Charles Demuth, *Calla Lilies (Bert Savoy)* (1926), oil on board, Carl van Vechten Gallery of Fine Arts, Fisk University, Nashville, Tennessee.

well-known vaudeville and nightclub performer, the female impersonator named Bert Savoy (Figure 4.20). Savoy's inclusion in Demuth's portrait series emphasizes how the identities of avant-garde artist and androgynous homosexual overlapped at this era. Unlike the artists' portraits coded with texts and numbers, however, Savoy is represented simply by an image of calla lilies springing from a shell. We can speculate about how this code works: impersonation may be suggested by the glossy artificiality of the flowers against the flat background; androgyny is implied both by the phallic flowers springing from the vaginal shell, and by the shape of the lilies, with curvaceous blossoms surrounding a phallic spadix. Both the flat background and the lily appear in Demuth's other works without these associations, however, and, as one reviewer noted, "It almost seems a pity to give at once the acceptable explanation of the picture." What was—and remains—most interesting about these "portraits" is the idea of coding identity in symbols that separate appearance from meaning, destabilizing the relationship between seeing and knowing.

The issues raised by Demuth's poster portraits and Hartley's abstract portraits have aesthetic implications beyond the coding of sexual identity. Yet it is significant that artists who were forced to hide their sexual identity became such early and astute investigators of the dynamic of coding, which divides audiences into "insiders," who feel they understand the work, and "outsiders"—in the case of these paintings the vast majority of viewers—who know that something is being signified but would be hard-pressed to explain exactly what it is. Such codes in art correspond to aspects of emerging sexual subcultures at this period, in which sartorial codes (red neckties, for instance) or code phrases (the term *gay,* for example, or calling men by women's names) allowed communication among insiders in public contexts. While recognizing the importance of such codes, it is important not to overrate their legibility. Even for men like Demuth and Hartley who moved in homosexual networks, codes were far from certain—a red necktie did not guarantee sexual community, and the risks of acting on a misreading were high. Rather than understanding their coded works as signaling clearly to a coterie of insiders, we might more accurately understand these paintings as experiments in ambiguity, reflecting their makers' experience of

uncertainty about the meanings of signs. Demuth's letters reveal his deep ambivalence about viewers' reactions to his poster portraits:

> I'll make them look at them until they see that they are, so called, pictures. I wish I could afford to work without ever showing it. I think they don't deserve to see our work; most of them anyway. I wish we could all "strike."

Here Demuth moves from wanting to force audiences to recognize his work immediately to assertions of antagonism toward the public, which grow quickly more vehement as they shift from yearnings for invisibility (not showing) to fantasies of solidarity and political action modeled on labor activism. The incoherence of this outburst by a man who prided himself on his writing suggests the force of Demuth's conflicted desires to be accepted by and to retreat from a society he resented for stigmatizing him, a conflict resolved in a fantasy of collective movement for social change. To simply decode Demuth's symbols overlooks this complex dynamic of appeal and antagonism, in which the limited readability of codes helps define minority identities, whether avant-garde or sexual—or both.

This complexity is the subject of one of Demuth's watercolors, a late work that returns to his early practice of illustrating fiction. *Distinguished Air* was inspired by a short story of that title by his friend Robert McAlmon, which describes the sexual underworld of Berlin (Figure 4.21). Rather than depicting a scene from the story, which takes place in a bar, Demuth borrowed the title for his own scenario set in a gallery of modern art. Here a diverse audience gathers around a caricatured sculpture by Constantin Brancusi (1876–1957), an artist who exemplified avant-garde antagonism toward social and legal convention. Brancusi's *Bird in Flight* was the subject of a notorious trial in 1927, when American customs officials, reacting to its

Figure 4.21. Charles Demuth, *Distinguished Air* (1930), watercolor and graphite, Whitney Museum of American Art, New York.

abstraction, ruled that it was not art (and hence subject to import taxes on the value of its bronze), and his *Princess X* was removed from a 1920 Paris exhibition because of its phallic shape. Demuth here melds *Princess X* with another of Brancusi's well-known sculptures, *Mademoiselle Pogany*, emphasizing the phallic overtones of the sculptor's images of women. The phallic charge of this abstract portrait is juxtaposed in Demuth's watercolor to a male couple: a top-hatted gent and a sailor with their arms intertwined. The sailor also attracts the attention of the man in the heterosexual couple, who turns from the phallic sculpture to stare at the corresponding anatomy of the sailor. His female companion looks past the art at the disheveled elegance of a woman in evening wear who, apparently enthralled by the sculpture, holds a fan to her crotch, where the sailor's eyes seem to stare. This web of glances questions the reliability of appearances and the purposes of vision. To assert definitive answers misses the point. Abstract art is here central to a network of ambiguous codes that include the signifiers of homosexuality.

THE LIMITS OF THE AVANT-GARDE

Demuth, late in his career, produced—but did not exhibit—a number of watercolors unambiguously depicting men having sex in the woods, on the beach, in bedrooms. His secreting away of such art belies common myths of a freewheeling avant-garde that never hesitated to shock the public by championing freedom of personal and aesthetic expression. Although some avant-garde circles afforded some leeway for expressions of homosexuality, acting on that opportunity always entailed risk. Both Hartley and Demuth, for instance, were pejoratively portrayed in literature produced by their avant-garde circles. Their names and details of their lives were combined in Eugene O'Neill's 1926 play *Strange Interlude* to create the character Charles Marsden, a stereotype of the repressed homosexual marked by an "indefinable feminine quality." Negative imputations of femininity also crept into assessments by critics. Demuth's paintings were described as "overdelicate" and "perverse," while his exhibited watercolors were reviewed as "limited" by an "almost feminine refinement." Even the seeming nonsense of the Dada movement had a dangerous edge. When the avant-garde journal *New York Dada* offered its send-up of the sports and society gossip pages of conventional newspapers in 1921, an article under the headline "Pug Debs [Pugilist Debutantes] Make Society Bow: Marsden Hartley May Make a Couple—Coming Out Party Next Friday" promised that

> Master Marsden will be attired in a neat but not gaudy set of tight-fitting gloves and will have a V-back in front and on both sides. He will wear very short skirts gathered at the waist with a nickel's worth of live leather belting. His slippers will be heavily jeweled with brass eyelets. . . . He has always been known as a daring dresser.

The article concludes by pairing Hartley with another avant-garde artist, Joseph Stella: "Master Marsden will give his first dance to his brother pug-deb Joseph, which will probably fill Marsden's card for the evening."

Dada's apparent nonsense, like the veiled allusions of critics or colleagues, functioned as a code that could be used to hint at sexual secrets, with the potential for devastating social and legal consequences. Some in the avant-garde deployed such allegations of homosexuality strategically, jockeying for position by associating their rivals—whether specific artists, or competing groups or styles—with femininity and homosexuality. This pattern is particularly noticeable in the history of modern design and decorative arts, professions already feminized by their association with household furnishings and linked to the Aesthetes' practices of collecting and self-expression through extravagant domestic display. When, in London in 1912, Wyndham Lewis broke from a consortium of artists promoting modernist aesthetics in interior design to found his own competing Rebel Arts Centre, he published a letter attacking his former colleagues at the Omega Workshops as a "party of strayed and Dissenting Aesthetes" that he claimed to have joined only because they needed "as much modern talent as they could find, to do the rough and masculine work without which they knew their efforts would not rise above the level of a pleasant tea party." Long after the Omega closed, Lewis continued to battle its founders, complaining about the lingering effects of "the aesthetic movement presided over by Oscar Wilde" and "the part that the feminine mind has played—and minds as well, deeply feminized, not technically on the distaff side—in the erection of our present criteria." More famously, the International Style architect Le Corbusier (born Charles-Edouard Jeanneret, 1887–1965) in his widely reproduced manifestos of the 1920s promoted his high-tech designs over old-fashioned styles he cast as lingering manifestations of aestheticism. Echoing the journalistic diatribes against Wilde, Le Corbusier attacked conventional architectural schools as "hot-houses where blue hortensias and green chrysanthemums are forced, and where unclean orchids are cultivated," and compared the contaminating influence of their graduates to "a milkman" who sold "his milk mixed with vitriol or poison." The houses produced by such architects, Le Corbusier claimed, were "moth-eaten boudoirs" that threatened the masculinity of male dwellers, leaving them "sheepish and shrivelled like tigers in a cage." Le Corbusier's rhetoric exploited growing associations of art and design with homosexuality to promote himself as the exception: an architect whose white-box modernist style allied him with "healthy and virile engineers," rather than with artists or interior designers.

Similarly, the novelist Ernest Hemingway used increasingly homophobic rhetoric to distinguish himself from the other men in Stein's circle of American expatriates, rather improbably attributing several of these remarks to Stein in his memoir *A Moveable Feast*. The flagrant and

often abusive womanizing by some heterosexual men in Stein's circle—an unwitting parody of Hemingway's claim that Stein said homosexuals "are always changing partners and cannot really be happy"—can be seen as overcompensation for these men's participation in circles stigmatized as homosexual. Similar impulses underlie the widespread critical celebration of Picasso's exploitative treatment of women. The often-repeated jest that the innovative Picasso changed his style when he got a new woman or new dog reasserts the heterosexual virility of this figurehead of the avant-garde, deflecting suspicion from an entire class of artists and critics. The violent misogyny that frequently accompanied such assertions of heterosexual virility among avant-garde artists—and, feminists like Carol Duncan have argued, within the visual dynamics of avant-garde art and its exhibition—must be counted among the most pernicious effects of the linkage between avant-garde and homosexual identity.

Homophobic reaction to associations between art and homosexuality had other ramifications, including the eventual withdrawal of artists like Demuth and Hartley from urban avant-garde circles; both artists ended their careers in the rural areas they came from. Perhaps the most significant result of proscriptions against explicit articulations of homosexual identity was the secreting of bodies of work by artists who did not display what they were moved to create. Recent research has uncovered evidence of double careers—one for public exhibition, another secret body of explicitly homoerotic imagery—among a number of prominent modernist artists, including not only Demuth and Van Vechten but also the Russian Pavel Tchelitchew (1898–1957) and the British Duncan Grant (1885–1978). Because artists' anxious friends or relatives often destroyed their homoerotic art—this was the case for some of Demuth's most sexual work—we will never be able fully to measure the extent of this practice. The double careers of homosexual artists, however, illuminate the early-twentieth-century experience of homosexual identity at a time when the phrase "double life" was often used to describe an existence in which individuals balanced distinct social networks, one involving a career and often a family, and the other a sex-based set of friends and gathering places.

Duncan Grant, one of the principal artists of the Omega Workshops, for instance, struggled to balance his identities as an artist and a homosexual. Early in his career, Grant's paintings were acclaimed by the proponents of "formalist" aesthetics. Because formalism made form and color, rather than subject matter, the basis of aesthetic quality, it discouraged imagery likely to be perceived as distracting or controversial. The formalist critic and artist Roger Fry (1866–1934) wrote, "I find that in proportion as a work of art is great it is forced to discard all appeal to sex," excusing the frequent appearance of nudes in art with the claim, "the plasticity of the human figure in general is peculiarly stimulating to the pictorial sense." Far from being prejudiced against homosexuality, Fry accepted same-sex relationships among his friends, including Grant, and focused his disapproval on art made for heterosexual arousal. Grant,

Figure 4.22. Duncan Grant, *Bathers by the Pond* (1920–21), oil on canvas, Pallant House, Chichester, © 2010 Artists Rights Society (ARS), New York/ADAGP, Paris. Although authorized as art by Grant's elegant evocation of Seurat's poses and pointillist style, this painting was still too risky for Grant to exhibit during his lifetime.

dismissed as "weak and lady-like" in Wyndham Lewis's competitive gibes, welcomed Fry's approval. Adopting Fry's formalism, Grant discussed his art in terms of colors and forms, and, in his paintings, channeled his impulses to visualize homoeroticism into variations on the theme of male bathers authorized by such earlier modernist painters as Paul Cézanne (1839–1906) and Georges Seurat (1859–91) (Figure 4.22). The constraints of formalism are suggested, however, by the existence of many explicitly erotic watercolors and drawings, which Grant kept secret during his lifetime. Ultimately, both Grant's private and public work were inhibited by the schism between them. The repetitious landscapes and floral still lifes that became the mainstay of his work by mid-century betrayed his growing boredom with the limitations on exhibitable art, contributing to a widespread perception that his skills diminished following his stylistically imaginative early career. And Grant's more fanciful erotica was often undercut by its furtive and hasty production, often in ballpoint pen on scraps of paper. At Grant's best, however, the two modes were united in art that combines sexual exuberance with dancing lines and splashes of color (Figure 4.23).

Although Grant's homosexuality was accepted by his friends and is today widely acknowledged, it could not be publicly affirmed until 1967, when the law under which Wilde was prosecuted was repealed. In that year, Grant assented to the disclosure of his homosexuality in a biography of his cousin, the historian Lytton Strachey, though he still worried that, at age eighty-two, he would be arrested. These facts are worth emphasizing to counter tendencies today to overlook how significantly the double life affected the lives and work of artists whose homosexuality is—as in Grant's case—now well known.

Figure 4.23. Duncan Grant, undated watercolor sketch of embracing figures, private collection. © 2010 Artists Rights Society (ARS), New York/ADAGP, Paris. The bodies of the figures joined in erotic embrace here erupt in the kind of colorful floral still life for which Grant was publicly known.

THE AVANT-GARDE AND THE OPEN SECRET

Historians struggle over the implications of the anonymous publications, inscrutable codes, and secret bodies of art that characterize the early-twentieth-century avant-garde. The avant-garde's first chroniclers—usually part of the communities they described and reluctant to unleash homophobic opprobrium on their friends or themselves—often covered up evidence of homosexuality. The omissions and falsehoods in these first hand accounts, nevertheless, misrepresented crucial elements of the history they claimed to record. In the last quarter of the twentieth century, often working courageously in the face of continuing pressures to suppress this history, a generation of scholars explored the relevance of homosexuality to the lives and work of many avant-garde artists. Motivated by commitments to tell the truth about sexuality and to create an affirmative chronicle of accomplishments by homosexuals, however, the work of scholars of this generation, especially when taken together, risks exaggerating the avant-garde's openness about homosexuality. Efforts to decode allusions to homosexuality in early-twentieth-century art and artists' biographies should not obscure the repression homosexuals faced within the art world and the concomitant importance of secret-keeping to the founding and functioning of the avant-garde. The secret of homosexuality was crucial, not just to individual artists, but to the production and reception of avant-garde art in general.

Homosexuality, as this chapter has already suggested, was an essential element in creating and sustaining the avant-garde. Important avant-garde alliances, such as the friendship between Hartley and Demuth, were grounded in the experience of sharing and keeping secrets. These bonds shaped particular artists' careers and larger avant-garde groupings. Homosexuality, thus, helped create the avant-garde; it also helped create audiences that sustained the avant-garde by rewarding artists who tantalized them with secrets. In the opening scene of Wilde's *The Picture of Dorian Gray* (discussed in chapter 3), one Aesthete observes, "I have grown to love secrecy. It seems to be the one thing that can make modern life mysterious or marvelous to us." Like many of Wilde's apparently flippant comments, this one points to a profound truth: from mystery novels to tell-all biographies, modern audiences love secrets. One fundamental appeal of avant-garde art was that it dealt in secrets, simultaneously shocking audiences by suggesting what

was usually unspoken and wrapping itself in various stylistic guises of inscrutability. Homosexuality, inscribed by sexology as the secret status of the artist as a "type," became the paradigmatic secret of avant-garde art. Its status as an "open secret"—constantly suspected and hinted at, but never frankly acknowledged—is among the defining characteristics of the modernist avant-garde.

The dynamic of the open secret helps answer a fundamental question about modernism: why, unlike patrons in earlier eras, did the bourgeoisie support art that seems to challenge its audience's values? One reason seems to be that, while some middle-class values—sexual propriety, respectful address, good craftsmanship, value for money—are undermined by modern art, the forms of this challenge reinforce the most fundamental of all capitalist values: individualism. In a culture that exalts individualism as an ideal for a middle class that, in fact, lives and works largely according to prescribed patterns, engagement with avant-garde art allows audiences to indulge in vicarious individualistic transgression without risking loss of authority. One strategy for maintaining authority—conscious to varying degrees—is for audiences to feel they know the secret of the avant-garde artist who challenges them, or of the avant-garde in general. Sexology allowed the bourgeoisie to believe that secret was homosexuality. Bourgeois audiences encouraged avant-garde artists who titillated and provoked their sense of the outrageous without—and this is crucial—articulating homosexual identity explicitly, since that would rob audiences of the authority they derived from the sense that they held privileged information. Ultimately, this performance of secret-keeping, in which both sides cannot acknowledge the open secret, undercuts the avant-garde's claims to radicalism, for its perpetual rehearsal of homosexual shame and heterosexual privilege reinforces the sexual norms that avant-garde art seems superficially to challenge.

These ideas have been examined—most influentially by Eve Sedgwick and D. A. Miller—in relation to avant-garde literature, with Wilde and Proust as important case studies. Wilde, the quintessential embodiment of the Aesthete-as-homosexual, personifies both the attractions and the peril of this dynamic. His brilliant career of provoking an attentive public collapsed after the too-explicit revelation of his humiliating secret. Proust more successfully sustained a career as an avant-garde author, but at the enormous personal cost of increasingly intense hypochondria, a condition that can be understood both as substituting various fantasized illnesses for the medical condition that cannot be named and as a strategy of withdrawal from the risks of interaction with the public.

Analogous dynamics, operating on a broader social level, mark the history of homosexuality in Germany during the first half of the twentieth century. From the clubs of Berlin to Hirschfeld's Institute of Sexology, Germany by the 1920s fascinated the world with increasingly open expressions of homosexuality. Then, in the 1930s, the Nazis exploited the visibility

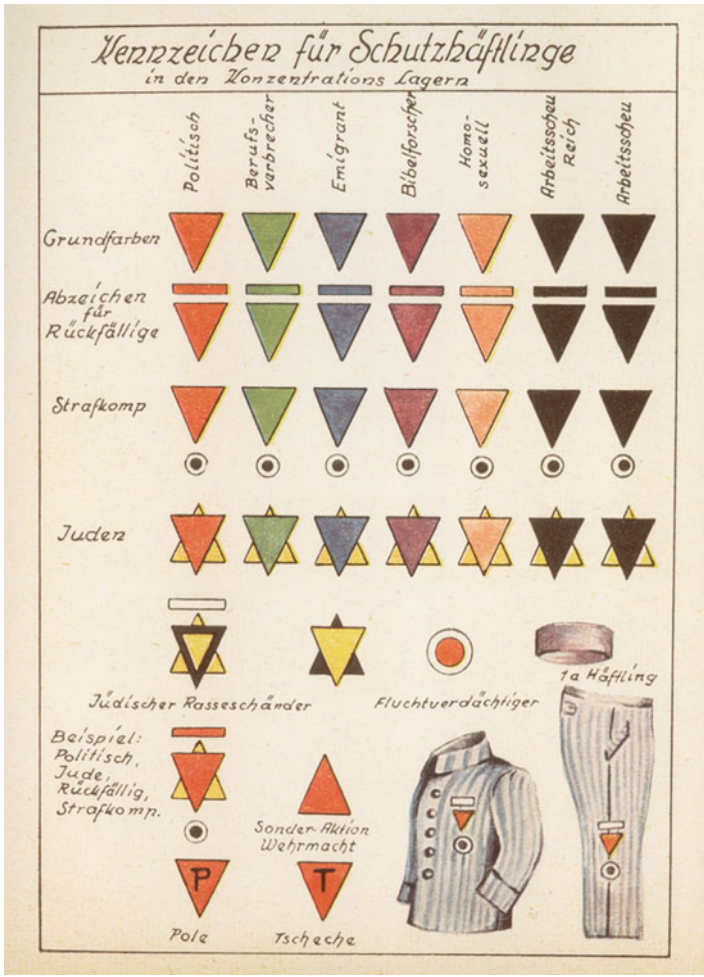


Figure 4.24. Chart from the Nazi concentration camp at Dachau showing the codes and colors used to mark the prisoners' uniforms. The categories across the top are political dissidents, professional criminals, immigrants, Jehovah's Witnesses, and the asocial. The secondary codes, from top to bottom, read: base-color, mark for second offenders, prisoner of a penal group, mark for Jews, and special marks—the last category includes Jewish

of homosexuality to galvanize popular support, presenting themselves as agents of old-fashioned morality and deploying accusations of homosexuality to intimidate dissenters both inside and outside their own party. In 1933, as they were consolidating power, Nazi troopers attacked the Institute of Sexology, ransacking its offices and burning its extensive library in highly publicized bonfires—Hirschfeld watched the burning of his research collection in a movie newsreel in France. Under the Nazis, German laws were revised following the English model to criminalize a wide range of "indecent" behaviors between men. Applying the new laws retroactively, the Nazis quadrupled the rates of prosecution for homosexual offenses. By 1935, a quarter of the men held in German jails and concentration camps were homosexuals. Between 1937 and 1939 almost 95,000 men were arrested for homosexual offenses. A chart of the codes used to identify prisoners in concentration camps documents the Nazis' application of scientific ideas about classification of human types: the pink triangle labeled homosexual men as a category comparable to political dissidents, professional criminals, immigrants, Jehovah's Witnesses, and the "asocial" (Figure 4.24). These behavior-based categories differed from—but could overlap with—the "racial" categories the Nazis used to define Jews and Gypsies. Although homosexuals were not targeted for an organized campaign of extermination, many died from overwork, torture, or medical experimentation into cures for their condition. Those who did not die were re-imprisoned after the war, as both East and West Germany retained Nazi-era laws against homosexuality and accepted Nazi legal findings as proof of culpability.

No one in the 1920s could predict the horrific risks run by Germans who, in the apparent freedom of the inter war years, identified as homosexuals. The potential for legal harassment and social humiliation, however, hovered over homosexuality everywhere. Strategies of anonymity, coding, and dissimulation, therefore, characterized even artists now

often used to exemplify the shocking sight of homosexuality within the early-twentieth-century avant-garde. Take, for example, Jean Cocteau and Jeanne Mammen, whose illustrations of homosexual nightlife opened this chapter. Although Cocteau today is well known for his homoerotic drawings and writings, his love poems were published with the gender of the beloved changed to a woman. Cocteau's *The White Book* (1928)—a semifictional memoir of eroticism, suicide, and betrayal—today is known for its conclusion condemning society for refusing to accept homosexuality as "one of the mysterious cogs in the divine masterpiece" and, instead, making "a vice of my honesty" (Text 4.2).

But Cocteau denied authorship of this text, and the first edition of only thirty-one copies appeared without even the name of a publisher. Second and third editions (just 450 and 500 copies, published in 1930 and 1949, respectively) remained anonymous, but contained illustrations in Cocteau's signature style (Figure 4.25). In Cocteau's illustrations, representation merges with abstraction, as images of the viewer blend with the body—or bodies—of the viewed, frustrating any attempt definitively to identify or distinguish the artist or the reader with homoerotic desire. A similar ambiguity marks his handwritten preface, which coyly asserted, "So highly do I esteem this book that, even if it were mine, I would not

Figure 4.24. (*Continued*) race mixers, other race mixers, escape suspects, Poles, Czechs, and army veterans. Homosexuals (in the second column from the right) were wedged between Jehovah's Witnesses and the asocial as enemies of the state.

THE FINAL PARAGRAPHS FROM JEAN COCTEAU'S *THE WHITE BOOK*, PUBLISHED ANONYMOUSLY IN 1928 (TRANSLATED BY CHRISTOPHER REED)

It doesn't matter, I will depart, leaving behind this book. If it is found, it should be published. Maybe it will help explain that in exiling myself I am not exiling a monster, but a man whom society would not allow to live because it considers one of the mysterious cogs in the divine masterpiece to be a mistake.

Instead of adopting the gospel of Rimbaud: *Now is the time of assassins*, the young would do better to remember the phrase: *Love is to be reinvented.* Dangerous experiences the world accepts in the realm of art because it does not take art seriously, but it condemns them in life.

I understand very well that a termite's standard, like the Russian ideal, which aims for the plural, condemns the singular in one of its highest forms. But they will never restrict certain flowers and certain fruits to being inhaled and consumed only by the rich.

A vice of society makes a vice of my honesty. I remove myself. In France, this vice does not land one in jail because of the habits of Cambacérès and the longevity of the Napoleonic Code. But I do not agree to be tolerated. That wounds my love of love and of liberty.

[The reference in the last paragraph is to rumors that proposed a personal motive for the lawyer who drafted the Napoleonic Code, which (as noted in chapter 3) decriminalized homosexuality.]

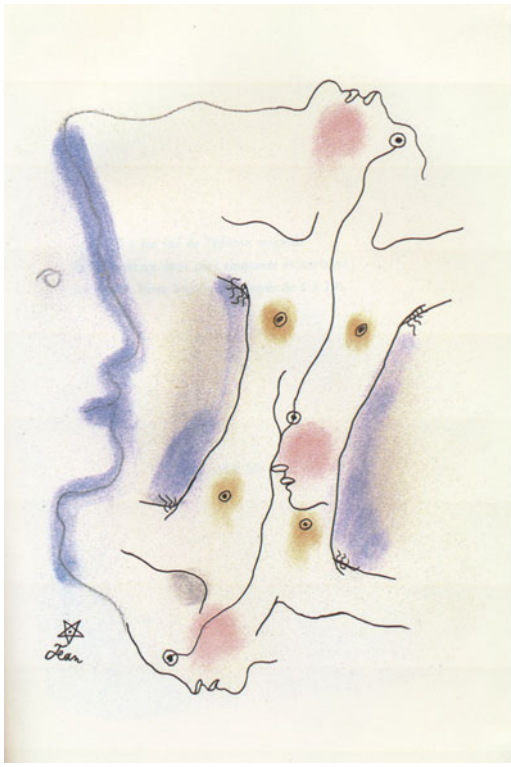


Figure 4.25. Jean Cocteau, illustration from *The White Book* (1930). © 2010 Artists Rights Society (ARS), New York/ADAGP, Paris.

consent to sign it because it takes the form of autobiography and I am waiting to write my own, which will be much more singular." The 1957 English-language edition carried another preface ambiguously refusing responsibility for the text: "be not uneasy if you find it in you to attribute this book to me. I'd be not the least bit ashamed of it. And I simply beg the unknown author's forgiveness for thus taking unfair usurping advantage of his anonymity." Acknowledging his authorship of the illustrations, however, Cocteau equally evasively cited them as "patent evidence of the fact that if I do not specialize in a taste for my own sex, I do nevertheless recognize one of the sly helping hands fond nature is wont to extend to humans." Cocteau never allowed an edition of *The White Book* to appear under his name, but he included it in a bibliography of his works. Unlike the persecuted Wilde and the reclusive Proust, Cocteau's clever exploitation of the open secret enabled him to conclude his career as an active and honored author, filmmaker, and artist, with commissions in his last years to design murals for Catholic churches in France and England.

Similar forces affected the career of Jeanne Mammen. Having made a name for herself with homoerotic imagery in the 1920s, Mammen found herself unemployable when the Nazis came to power in 1933 and a prominent gallery promptly canceled a contract to illustrate a German translation of Pierre Louÿ's 1894 book of poems *Songs of Bilitis*, describing Sappho's Lesbos. Mammen's unfinished set of illustrations abandon the text's classical setting, depicting instead a range of scenes from contemporary lesbian life (Figure 4.26). The delicacy and elegance of Mammen's images transcended the usual voyeuristic sensationalism, but the cancellation of this promising project ended her career as an illustrator. During World War II, Mammen peddled used books on the streets of Berlin to survive. In the postwar years, when she resumed her career as a painter, she dismissed her earlier work as unimportant, and abandoned illustration for oil painting in abstract styles. Mammen's unfinished series of illustrations of modern lesbian life remains a testament to the obstacles artists faced in forthrightly representing homosexuality.

The artists for whom the dynamic of the open secret worked best, of course, were those who were not homosexual and therefore could more freely exploit signifiers of sexual deviance to provoke their audiences. This dynamic is clear in the career of Marcel Duchamp (1887–1968). Duchamp is famous for his "Assisted Readymades": found objects manipulated or changed ("assisted") and then exhibited as art. These works are central to

the development of the avant-garde—a panel of art-world insiders recently ranked Duchamp's *Fountain* (1917) as the most influential work of twentieth-century art—and accordingly have been almost endlessly analyzed and debated. Studies of Duchamp's non-art artworks center on issues of aesthetics and originality, however, rarely noting how his Assisted Readymades consistently hint at homosexuality to heighten their transgressive charge. *Fountain*, a urinal turned on its side, clearly raises the possibility of finding aesthetic pleasure in public toilets and male urination. Another well-known work, his *L.H.O.O.Q.* (1919), is a reproduction of Leonardo da Vinci's *Mona Lisa* with a drawn-on mustache, beard, and bawdy title: the sound of the letters in French can be understood as "elle a chaud au cul," a colloquial expression that translates roughly as "she's got a hot ass." While this could be interpreted as heterosexual graffiti, Duchamp chose for this image (an aroused and/or arousing mustachioed androgyne) a figure doubly associated with the history of homosexuality. The mysterious *Mona Lisa* fascinated Aesthetic and Decadent writers, while Leonardo was Freud's famous paradigm of the artist as homosexual (discussed in chapter 2), a precedent Duchamp acknowledged. Duchamp extended his play with transvestism and androgyny by himself adopting the feminine pseudonym Rrose Sélavy, a pun on the sentiment "eros c'est la vie" (eros is life) with echoes of Gertrude Stein's catchphrase "a rose is a rose is a rose." Duchamp used this female name to sign several of his writings and Assisted Readymades, and twice had himself photographed in drag as Rrose Sélavy in 1921, when cross-dressing was strongly associated with homosexual nightclubs. These photographs appeared both individually and incorporated into Duchamp's art. One graced a label Duchamp made for a bottle of "Eau de Voilette," a wordplay on perfumed "violet water" that reverses the vowels to mean "veil water," with all the associations of masking that veils imply (Figure 4.27).

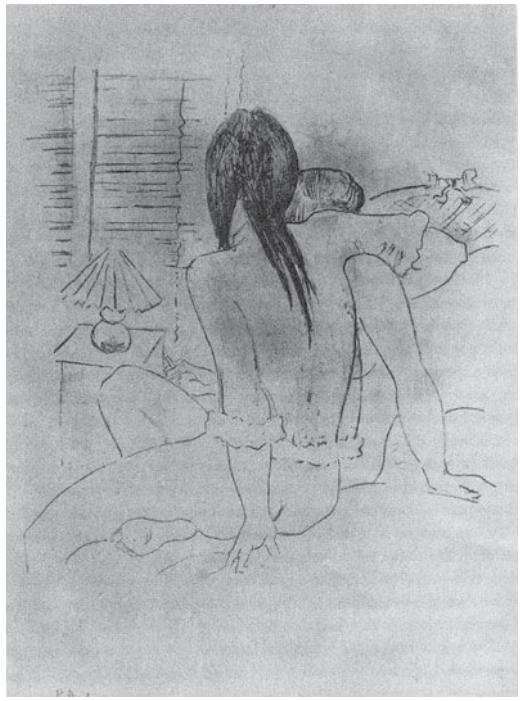


Figure 4.26. Jeanne Mammen, *In the Morning* (1931), lithograph, one of seven extant images from a planned set of twelve, Berlinische Galerie, Berlin. © 2010 Artists Rights Society (ARS), New York/ADAGP, Paris.

A photograph of Duchamp's "Eau de Voilette" appeared on the cover of the avant-garde art magazine that satirized Hartley as a "pug deb." This juxtaposition exemplifies both the centrality and the complexity of the "open secret" dynamic in avant-garde art. Duchamp's success in exploiting—without becoming defined by—transgressive sexuality made his art an inspiration to subsequent generations of avant-garde artists and theorists. But it is important to recognize that, as an expatriate (a Frenchman in New York) known for his numerous heterosexual affairs and two marriages (both to socially prominent women), Duchamp could afford to play with gender-deviance and allusions to homosexuality without risking categorization as homosexual.

Figure 4.27. Marcel Duchamp, *Belle Haleine, Eau de Voilette*, as depicted on the cover of *New York Dada* (1921), with portrait photograph by Man Ray. © 2010 Artists Rights Society (ARS), New York/ADAGP, Paris. The initials RS—for Rrose Sélavy, Duchamp's female persona—appear on the bottom of the label under the portrait of Duchamp in drag.

Generally overlooked in accounts of Duchamp's avant-gardism, moreover, is the way that, as he grew famous and was cast as a father figure by the notoriously homophobic Surrealists in the 1940s, his art's play with androgyny transformed into patterns of heterosexual misogyny characteristic of surrealist fantasies of eroticized violence against women's bodies. Duchamp's late works include a 1947 book cover featuring a squishy rubber breast that seems to be cut off a woman's body. His small bronzes of the 1950s, *Female Fig Leaf* and *Objet dard* (a pun on *objet d'art*, "art object," but also on *dard*, French slang for penis), look like implements of heterosexual domination. Duchamp's famous *Etant donnés* (this ambiguous title, literally "being that are given," is usually translated simply as Given), was created secretly between 1946 and 1966 and permanently installed at the Philadelphia Museum of Art. Viewers look through a peephole in a massive, ancient-looking door to see the body of a naked, headless female mannequin splayed on a bed of twigs as if raped and murdered. George Segal (discussed in chapter 6), a younger sculptor in Duchamp's New York circle, described *Etant donnés* as a murdered Mona Lisa, her cryptic smile transferred to a "smirking" vagina. Several others of Duchamp's late works clearly repudiate the androgyny of *L.H.O.O.Q.* and Rrose Sélavy. A 1962 photograph of the artist posing with a reproduction of the *Mona Lisa* bears a scribbled mustache and beard on Duchamp's face above the inscription, "Dear Rose, Here's one on you, oui?" Duchamp officially killed off his female alter-ego in 1965 by mailing invitations to the private view of his retrospective exhibition that bore the image of an unadulterated *Mona Lisa* with the title *Shaved L.H.O.O.Q.* and commissioning a funerary urn for Rrose Sélavy, which he filled with ashes from the after-dinner cigar—symbol of phallic privilege—that he smoked at a dinner given in his honor.

THE OPEN SECRET AND MASS CULTURE

As beliefs linking homosexuality and art spread through the middle classes during the twentieth century, the dynamic of the open secret animated not only the avant-garde, but also more popular forms of visual culture. Alan Sinfield has analyzed this dynamic in relation to the plays of Noël Coward, popular from the 1920s onward. The careers of certain celebrities—for example, the flamboyant American pianist known as Liberace—also exemplify the appeal of the open secret. This dynamic also animated the advertising and fashion imagery generated

Figure 4.28. J. C. Leyendecker, illustration for Arrow Shirt Collar advertisement (1910). © 2010 National Museum of American Illustration, Newport RI, *www.AmericanIllustration.org*. Photo courtesy Archives of the American Illustrators Gallery, New York, *www.AmericanIllustrators.com*. This masterpiece of subliminal suggestion uses phallic golf bags to eroticize the two male figures, while the dog leaping on the woman implies a panting physical affection that attaches itself to the reciprocal desiring gazes of the men supposedly inspired by their collars.

for the rapidly expanding and highly competitive medium of illustrated magazines. Carl Van Vechten's scrapbooks, created in the 1950s from materials gathered since the 1930s, might be seen as a pioneering—if informal—study of this phenomenon. His juxtapositions of sober-sided articles warning about homosexuality with sexy pictures from sports pages and travel features, suggestive headlines and advertising taglines, all interspersed with his own explicitly homoerotic photography, make a vigorous case for how energetically magazines and newspapers invoked homosexuality to both titillate and discipline readers.

These trends went back to the first decades of the twentieth century, when new mass-market illustrated magazines created a demand for images that looked innovative, stylish, and provocative. Among the first sensations of visual mass culture was the Arrow Collar Man, invented in 1905 by illustrator J. C. Leyendecker (1874–1951) (Figure 4.28). Based on the handsome Charles Beach, Leyendecker's companion for fifty years, this fictional figure was receiving up to 17,000 fan letters, some containing proposals of marriage, every month by the 1920s. Such statistics were widely cited to offer a reassuring heterosexualization of these images of attractive men eyeing one another, which circulated through middle-class homes in magazines. Infusing the products they advertised with the allure of daring modernity, Leyendecker's eye-catching men, depicted as both desiring and desirable, set a standard for advertising and fashion imagery. The use of "gay" to mean homosexual was documented in slang dictionaries by the 1930s and was common enough to be ad-libbed by Cary Grant in the 1938 film *Bringing Up Baby,* when he responds to a question about why he is wearing a woman's bathrobe by shouting, "I've just gone gay all of a sudden!" So it is significant that, by the 1930s, ads for Arrow underwear showed two handsome men in a locker room admiring each other's briefs

Figure 4.29. Cannon bath-towel advertisement, number 6 in a series published in various magazines in 1944.

with the headline "And now the Shorts with the Seamless Crotch go Gay! (BUT NOT TOO GAY)" and copy below extolling the products' new range of colors "that makes men blush in the locker room." By the 1940s, products from powdered drinks to bath towels grabbed viewers' attention with headlines shouting double entendres. "To Wake Up GAY in the Morning!" consumers were advised by Ovaltine to "Just Try This at Bedtime Tonight!"—a tagline calculated to convey simple cheerfulness to some while imbuing a rather pedestrian product with clever daring for more sophisticated customers. Following a strategy initiated by Ivory Soap during World War I, a series of World War II–era Cannon Towels ads deployed scenes of homoerotic display in communal baths and showers (Figure 4.29). Prominently placed in mass-circulation news and women's magazines, these images targeted women on the home front in a dynamic comparable to the way Ingres' *Turkish Bath* (discussed in chapter 2) multiplies bodies in homoerotic profusion for the delight of viewers presumed to be heterosexual. These advertisements exemplify the workings of the open secret in the way they attract attention and suggest daring sophistication by allusions to the taboo, without affirming—or even explicitly acknowledging—homosexuality.

Figure 4.30. Cecil Beaton, ballet film improvisation starring Nathalie Paley and Victor Kraft. Picture courtesy of Sotheby's Picture Library/ Cecil Beaton Archives. This photograph, published in British *Vogue* in 1935, exemplifies the careful compositions that emphasize the artist's aesthetic sensitivity, while the texture of the draperies that echo the gesture of the male dancer emphasizes the sensuality of his muscled arms.

As popular magazines turned increasingly to photography, similar dynamics propelled the careers of celebrity and fashion photographers, among them the English Cecil Beaton (1904–1980) and the American George Platt Lynes (1907–1955). Fashion and arts magazines used these photographers' pictures to fascinate audiences with the spectacle of modernity: modern socialites, modern clothes, modern furnishings, modern artists and performers, all presented in a modern way. Outside upper-income brackets and major urban centers, however, such spectacle was as close as most readers were likely to get to the glamorous, modern culture these magazines depicted; the dynamic of the "open secret" seems to have functioned in this context to neutralize feelings of envy and intimidation that commingled with readers' admiration

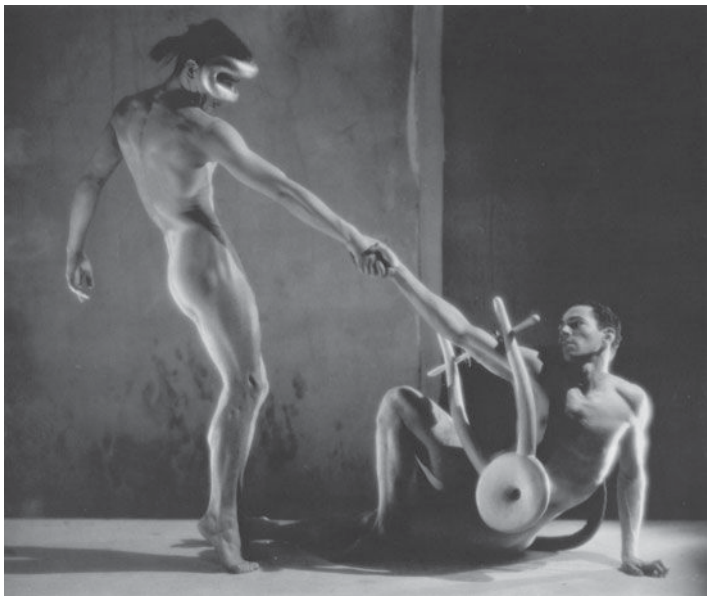


Figure 4.31. George Platt Lynes, *Pose from 'Orpheus'* (1948). © Estate of George Platt Lynes.

and desire. Stereotypes attributing homosexuality to male fashion designers, interior decorators, and choreographers flourished along with the journals promoting their work. Like other stereotypes, these had ambivalent effects, repelling some, but attracting others—like Beaton and Lynes—to careers in this new field. Both Beaton and Lynes developed prodigious technical skills and were sought after by major magazines (Figure 4.30). Both imbued their subjects with an eye-catching novelty achieved by the careful manipulation of modern styles, especially the unexpected juxtapositions characteristic of surrealism. Both moved in international circles that included many of the artists already discussed in this chapter—both photographed Gertrude Stein and Jean Cocteau, for instance—and both were involved with theater and ballet, using images of dancers in the poses and costumes of modernist dance to expand the range of acceptable public representations of the male body.

Beaton countered imputations of homosexuality with public performances of heterosexual courtship, including a carefully rumored affair with film star Greta Garbo. Privately, however, he, like Carl Van Vechten, compiled bawdy scrapbooks, pasting cutouts of bodybuilders into high-style interiors; these remain sealed from public view a quarter century after his death. Like Cocteau, Beaton tantalized the public with Aesthetic mannerisms and coy revelations. In 1958, reminiscing in *Vogue* about his first picture for that magazine, a photograph accompanying a review of a seventeenth-century play staged by undergraduate men at Cambridge University, he described it as "a slightly out-of-focus snapshot of Webster's Duchess of Malfi (portrayed by the distinguished English don Mr George Rylands), standing in the subaqueous light outside the men's lavatory of the ADC Theatre in Cambridge." Readers were left to infer what they would from this scenario of two young men, both now middle-aged bachelors well known for their careers in the arts, one photographing the other in drag in this setting.

Where Beaton left homoeroticism on the level of suggestion, Lynes consistently challenged the boundaries between imagery sanctioned for publication and franker expressions of homosexuality. Staging homoerotic scenes at night on the expensive sets he commissioned for fashion

shoots during the day, or restaging publicity images for ballet companies with the poses and props of the performances but with the male dancers naked, Lynes conferred his elegant style on highly sexual images (Figure 4.31). Lynes limited the circulation of his most erotic work during most of his lifetime, but in 1942 the death in battle of a beloved studio assistant turned his work toward modes both more emotional and less discreet. A haunting 1943 portrait of Marsden Hartley, with whom Lynes shared both a studio and the experience of losing an idealized lover to war, pushed beyond the norms of celebrity portraiture (Figure 4.32). The connections linking the crumpled figure of the painter, his massive shadow, and the indistinct figure of a brooding young man suggest what could not be explicit: the mourning of an older man for a deceased younger lover. At the same time, Lynes gave up fashion photography and began publishing his erotic images—sometimes under pseudonyms—in European magazines. He also abandoned discretion in his erotic life, jeopardizing his friends' reputations and scaring away commercial clients. Before his death in 1955, Lynes destroyed the negatives for his exhibited and commercial work. But, like Van Vechten, Lynes left posterity a surprise, turning over the negatives and prints for hundreds of the nudes he considered his best work to the American sexologist Alfred Kinsey. Collected as scientific evidence of homosexuality, these photographs today reveal the range of both Lynes's talent and the international networks of avant-garde artists, writers, dancers, and choreographers involved in the creation of these homoerotic images.

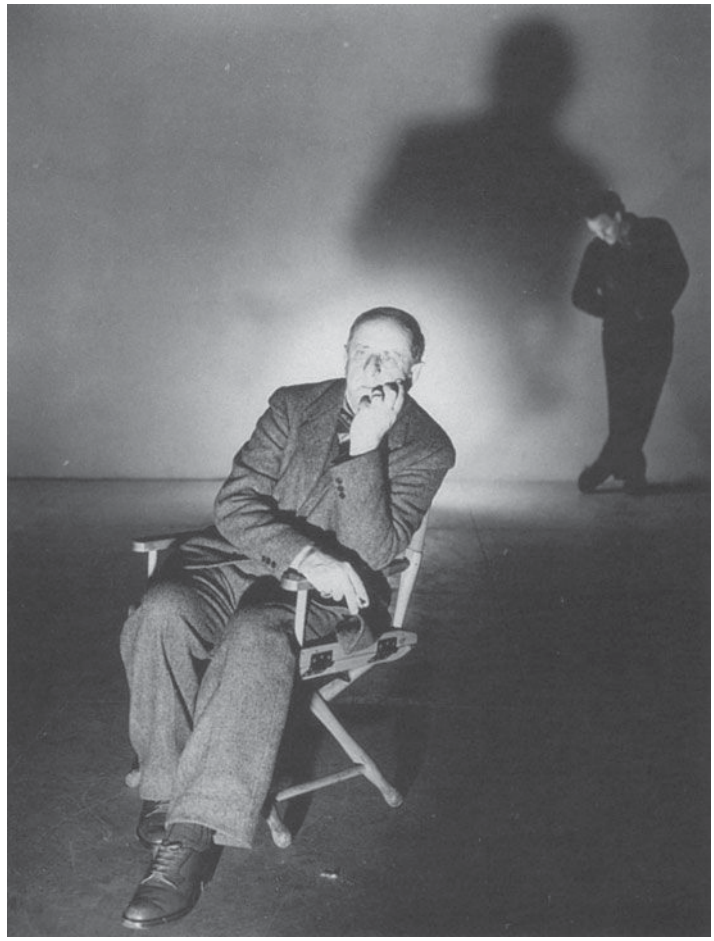


Figure 4.32. George Platt Lynes, *Marsden Hartley* (1943). © Estate of George Platt Lynes.

Lynes's life and career encapsulate many of the connections between art and homosexuality during the first half of the twentieth century. Aspects of his art—especially his staging of classical myths—extend the Aesthetic legacy of Fred Holland Day, with whom this chapter began. Lynes's participation in both the international avant-garde and mass-circulation pictorial magazines, however, included him in two of the

Figure 4.33. George Platt Lynes, *Nude Model in the Photographer's Studio Office* (c. 1940). © Estate of George Platt Lynes. This image foregrounds the erotic imagery Lynes circulated among his friends against a background of his published portraits and fashion photographs.

most important new manifestations of art in the twentieth century. Inspired and enabled in his career by friends and lovers, Lynes personifies the growth of homosexual networks within the avant-garde. His concealment of his homoerotic imagery reflects the limitations on expressions of sexual identity outside his immediate social context and the concomitant importance of secrecy to the visual culture of modernism (Figure 4.33).

CHAPTER 5

THE SHORT TRIUMPH OF THE MODERN, 1940–65

IF HOMOSEXUAL IDENTITY was invented in the nineteenth century and disseminated through the upper classes in the first half of the twentieth, it—like many modern technologies—found a mass market during and after World War II. Social instability in the aftermath of World War I (as noted in chapter 4) and during the Great Depression in the 1930s loosened conventional ideas about sex and gender, but, more than any other event, World War II catalyzed the social dynamic by which homosexuality was energetically both evoked and repressed. The opening of the previous chapter notes how important military screening was to spreading medical theories of homosexuality as a fixed and fundamental identity. While military doctors cataloged what they believed were behavioral and physical signs of sexual types in order to exclude individuals classed as homosexual, the vast social changes caused by the war created conditions in which people were far more likely to witness and experience intense bonds between members of the same sex. Millions of people around the world—soldiers and military support staff, factory workers, refugees—were transplanted from familial networks, often in rural settings, to crowded, predominantly same-sex environments around big cities at the same time that they confronted violence and destruction that undermined conventional certainties about virtue and probity. The resultant loosening of sexual norms affected both hetero- and homosexuality, and the resultant anxieties provoked some politicians to extravagant performances of outrage, scripted for and amplified

by the press—with the paradoxical effect of teaching more and more of the public that homosexuality was a distinct and widespread identity.

Especially in the United States and Great Britain (the latter due, at least in part, to American pressure), politicians kept gender deviance and homosexuality in the public eye after the war. Campaigns for gender normativity focused on removing women from paid employment, particularly the factory jobs coveted by men leaving the armed forces, and a range of postwar social policies discouraged alternatives to nuclear families centered on a male breadwinner. For instance, under "modern" housing programs, standardized units for two parents with two children replaced old-fashioned multigenerational dwellings; marriage was often a precondition for occupying these homes. Such implicit affirmations of heterosexuality were combined, in American policy, with bans on paying veterans' benefits to soldiers who had been discharged for homosexuality and against admitting homosexuals as immigrants. At the same time, politicians keen to present themselves as defenders of national security mounted campaigns that equated homosexuals with Communists and criminals, reinforcing notions of an all-encompassing homosexual identity that determined a wide range of a person's beliefs and behaviors.

Publicity about homosexuality saturated the news media, as respected big-city newspapers, intellectually ambitious literary quarterlies, and cheap scandal-sheets alike published sensationalistic exposés that repeatedly rehearsed surprise at the discovery of urban homosexual communities. This paradoxical pattern was so familiar by 1953 that the pioneering gay magazine *One* named it "mock shock." Anxieties were fueled by the sexologist Alfred Kinsey's 1948 best-selling book, *Sexual Behavior of the Human Male*. Kinsey's statistics showed that half of white American men acknowledged erotic attraction to other men, that more than a third had shared orgasms with other males, and 13 percent had engaged in predominantly homosexual sex for a period of at least three years. These findings, which are still controversial, shocked the reading public, but a reasoned analysis of this data supports the point made in the previous chapter that conceptions of homosexuality as a pathologized identity were slow to spread beyond the bourgeoisie. Kinsey found that acknowledged incidence of homosexual activity fell dramatically with higher levels of education. College-educated men were five times less likely to report such activity than men with grammar-school educations, who were less aware of scientific theories that made such behavior an identity-defining characteristic. One interpretation of Kinsey's data might be that sex between men was both more widespread and less significant before sexology.

Kinsey's goal had been to refine binary conceptions of hetero- versus homosexuality by mapping individuals' behaviors and fantasies along a six-point scale that ran from exclusive heterosexuality to exclusive homosexuality. Though the latter category fit only 4 percent of his

subjects, Kinsey's intention to use quantification to normalize a range of sexualities was lost amid sensationalistic claims that his research proved homosexuals were everywhere. Simultaneously, the growing influence of Freudian psychoanalysis, which posited that homosexuality was a stage of childhood sexual development in which some adults remained pathologically arrested, promoted widespread anxiety that this condition was latent in everyone. Though Freud, like Kinsey, intended to normalize homoerotic impulses and dreams, his ideas contributed to fears that homosexuality could be released in anyone through the influence of over-affectionate mothers or homoerotic seduction. In this increasingly homophobic era, scientists and doctors anxious to maintain their authority rushed to counter the normalizing impetus of Freudian theory by pathologizing homosexuality—so much so that historian Michael Sherry has concluded that, in 1950s America, "the most sustained and pernicious commentary on gay artists came from psychoanalysts and other medical experts."

Anxiety over homosexuals' self-replicating potential—especially in relation to teenagers, who were thought to be especially susceptible to homosexual recidivism—contributed to calls for increased enforcement of laws against homosexuality. In Britain, annual prosecutions for "gross indecency," the crime for which Wilde was convicted, rose from 316 in 1938 to 2,322 in 1955. In America in 1955, the small city of Boise, Idaho, mounted a nationally publicized search for homosexuals during which the police interrogated 1,400 local residents. During the 1950s, expulsions of American military personnel for homosexuality trebled to over 3,000 men and women annually. Oblivious to the irony that official Communist ideology condemned homosexuality as a symptom of the depravity caused by bourgeois individualism, the American government at this period linked homosexuality to Communism with rules that barred people with histories of either affiliation from employment in the government or in firms that contracted with the government, categories that included over 20 percent of all jobs.

Such attitudes created the condition they claimed to suppress. Individuals criminally prosecuted, discriminated against in employment, and alienated from their society developed an outsider's skepticism about social and legal norms as well as sophisticated skills of masking and dissimulation. In retrospect, it seems plausible that medical experts like Yale psychiatrist Clements Fry erred when they located the problem of homosexuality in the fact that "the homosexual's sexual impulse differs from the 'normal' sexual impulse in its direction and choice of sexual object"—Fry's scare quotes around "normal" indicate this well-meaning doctor's doubts about the dogma he propounded in his much-used textbook *Mental Health in College*. It might be more accurate to cite homophobia, rather than homosexuality, as the "abnormality" that created the condition Fry described, inflecting "the total development of the personality and its action in its environment," in a way that "affects the

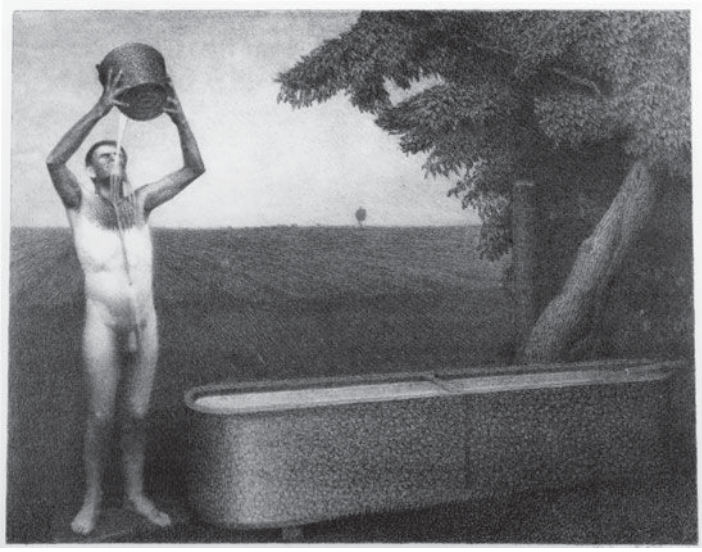


Figure 5.1. Grant Wood, *Sultry Night* (1939), lithograph. Art © Estate of Grant Wood/ Licensed by VAGA, New York, NY. Photo credit: Art Resource, NY. The soft tones of Wood's twilight image invite a lingering pleasure as much tactile as visual where the water courses down the farmer's brilliant torso. The coffinlike horizontal trough that contrasts so strongly with the male figure oblivious to our gaze freights this ambivalently erotic image with overtones of anxiety and death.

course of the individual's life as a social being, shapes his goals and the values to which he subscribes, and colors his attitude to the environment." Whatever their cause, by the second half of the twentieth century, ideas of the homosexual as a "type" became accepted fact.

EXPRESSION AND REPRESSION IN POSTWAR ART

The art world amplified the paradoxes of the culture as a whole. Definitions of modernism in postwar art centered on a return to abstraction, reversing trends toward social realism in the 1930s, but the social implications of this "modern" art were ambiguous. Communist governments banned abstraction as (like homosexuality) emblematic of bourgeois individualism, while anti-Communist politicians in the United States, calling abstraction part of an international plot to subvert traditional American values, condemned modern art as (like homosexuality) Communistic. The irony that Communist and anti-Communist politicians shared homophobic rhetorics to reject abstract art in favor of propagandistic realism is deepened by recent revelations about the homosexuality of Grant Wood (1891–1942), a popular American regionalist painter whose realistic style won praise from conservatives for upholding antimodernist probity. Wood's 1930 painting, *American Gothic,* was widely admired as a celebration of middle-American values, although the fact that Grant originally intended to pair this painting with one juxtaposing a plump couple with a wide Prairie Style house suggests a satirical intent similar to the effect of some of his other humorous paintings. His 1939 lithograph *Sultry Night*—a more serious, sexually ambiguous study of a middle-American farmer—was prohibited by the post office from distribution through the mail; as a result, less than half the projected number were printed (Figure 5.1).

Contrary to the implicit assumptions of politicians who linked abstraction with homosexuality, many of the mid-twentieth-century artists who retained realist styles were motivated by a desire to explore homoerotic imagery. Painters in George Platt Lynes's New York circle—most prominently Paul Cadmus (1904–99) and Jared French (1905–88)—documented homoerotic currents in contemporary American life with a crisply realistic style that recalled Michelangelo and earlier Renaissance art (Figures 5.2, 5.3). Cadmus and French revived Renaissance techniques of painting in tempera on wood, asserting a historical legacy that

justified their depictions of modern men—sailors, acrobats, athletes, dandies—in homoerotic interactions. Despite some censorship controversies in the 1930s, these painters' old-fashioned realist style, combined with their vigilance in limiting the circulation of their most homoerotic work to like-minded friends and patrons, gained them the mixed blessing of critical indifference as they sacrificed claims to rank in the avant-garde for the freedom to explore homoerotic imagery.

In the postwar art world, the stakes—and risks—were highest for artists competing for avant-garde status. Returning to patterns established early in the century (as discussed in chapter 4), artists camouflaged their homosexuality with other forms of minority identification and generated complex symbols that masked too-obvious forms of self-revelation. The American Mark Tobey (1890–1976) is a case in point. Schooled in fashion illustration, Tobey left New York in 1923 for the Pacific-coast city of Seattle, where his figurative paintings, such as *Dancing Miners*, documented the physical intimacy of working-class men (Figure 5.4). In Seattle, he became close friends with a Chinese student who introduced him to calligraphy, a practice Tobey described in erotic terms: "There is pleasure and release. Each movement, like tracks in the snow, is recorded and often loved for itself." In 1934, Tobey moved to England and traveled to East Asia, visiting his Chinese friend in Shanghai and studying calligraphy in Japan. After the war, as New York replaced Paris as the avant-garde art capital, Tobey achieved worldwide fame for his abstract paintings in which veils of evocatively Orientalist calligraphic marks hover on the far side of legibility (Figure 5.5). Although Tobey confessed his ambivalence about this shift to abstraction—saying, "I had a hard time, out of my love of figures, not to carry that along"—in the immediate postwar years New York's most influential critic, Clement Greenberg, hailed his art as an American equivalent to European modernism. But Greenberg grew anxious about what he saw as Tobey's limitation to "a very narrow compass of sensations" and quickly abandoned Tobey's art of "evasion," which he compared to the poetry of Emily Dickinson and Marianne Moore in that it "does not show us enough of ourselves and of the kind of life we live in our cities, and therefore does not release enough of our feeling." In contrast, Greenberg proclaimed Jackson Pollock (1912–56) "the most powerful painter in contemporary America."

The terms of Greenberg's abandonment of Tobey are not overtly homophobic any more than Tobey was openly homosexual. But Greenberg's implication that Tobey's abstraction hides a feminine secret, alien to the power of a masculine "us," typifies the rhetoric of the American avant-garde. In theory dedicated to the free expression of emotion, abstract-expressionist practice carefully restricted which emotions were appropriate to express. Proscriptions against homosexuality were explicit. The constitution of the Artists' Club, for example, founded by the leading Abstract-Expressionist artists, excluded from membership

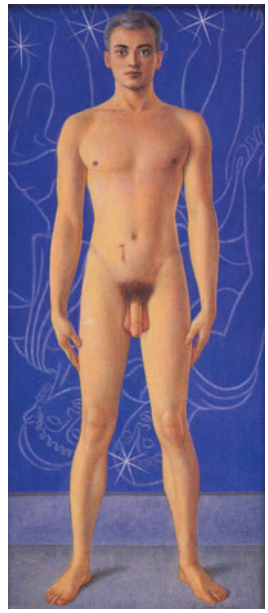


Figure 5.2. Jared French, *Portrait of George Platt Lynes* (1941–42), egg tempera on linen mounted on panel, private collection. One of a series of nude portraits of Lynes and the others in his threesome, the figure is authorized by both nature and history in the background image of a stellar constellation named for Greek companions.

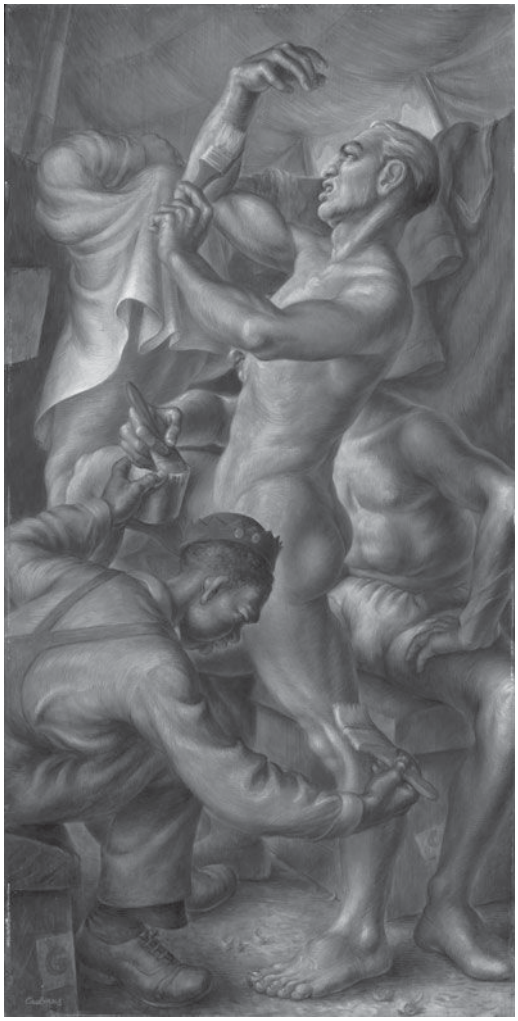


Figure 5.3. Paul Cadmus, *Gilding the Acrobats* (1935), oil and tempera on panel, The Metropolitan Museum of Art, Arthur Hoppock Hearn Fund, 1950 (50.94.3). Image © The Metropolitan Museum of Art. Jared French, who was one of Cadmus's lovers, modeled for all of the interlocking figures in this image, including the black youth whose face blocks any glimpse of genitalia. Both compositionally and thematically, this

homosexuals along with critics and women. Critics favorable to Abstract Expressionism strained to generate heroic rhetorics of artistic accomplishment and ruthlessly policed the new art for signs of effeminacy. Greenberg, for instance, in 1948 chastised Robert Motherwell for allowing the magnificence of his "turbid and vehemently brushed" paintings to collapse into "an archness like that of the interior decorator." Little wonder that Motherwell, his heterosexuality impugned by military authorities (as related in the previous chapter) and prominent critics, turned his abstractions increasingly toward signifiers of masculinity. Adopting a rhetoric of heroic Americanness, Motherwell asserted, "What is specifically 'American' is the violence," and defended the vast size of Abstract-Expressionist paintings with the claim: "The large format, at one blow, destroyed the century-long tendency of the French to domesticize modern painting, to make it intimate. . . . Brother! What a gesture!" Such bombast suggests how anxious artists and critics were to counter associations between art-making and effeminacy that stemmed from sexology's linkage of art and sexual deviance.

From this perspective, the career of the Abstract Expressionist painter Jackson Pollock looks like an extended—ultimately self-destructive—performance of masculinity. When Greenberg cast aside Tobey's poetic art of "evasion" in 1947, it was in order to champion the "Gothic, morbid and extreme" Pollock, whose art of "violence, exasperation and stridency," he said, echoed the "radically American" feeling of (male) novelists William Faulkner and Herman Melville. By 1949, Pollock was profiled in the popular *Life* magazine under the headline "Is he the greatest living painter in the United States?" In the accompanying photograph, Pollock posed against his twenty-two-foot-long dripped and splattered painting *Summertime* (Figure 5.6). Dressed in the paint-spattered, rough clothes of a manual laborer with a cigarette dangling from his lips, he defied any imputation of femininity. Neither the art critics nor the popular press revealed the bouts of violence and alcoholism that ultimately killed Pollock (and a girlfriend) in a car crash at the age of forty-four. A friend later attributed Pollock's destructive bravado to the cultural climate: "artists did have such a limp-wristed image in the American view," so "they had to overcompensate by being super macho." Though Pollock's career benefited from the postwar art world's demand for new art redolent of masculinity,

the artist himself fell victim to the concomitant pressure to appear manly. Some biographers link Pollock's self-destructive behavior to his repression of erotic attraction to—and perhaps sexual experiences with—other men. It may be that his art also suffered from the critics' insistence on large, gestural abstraction. Like Tobey, Pollock spoke nostalgically of figuration, claiming, "Recognizable images are always there in the end." We can only speculate about directions his art might have taken had he lived longer and felt freer to explore his interests. Long celebrated as the paradigmatic Abstract Expressionist, Pollock can also be seen as a paradigm of the costs of homophobic repression.

Less ambivalent, of course, were the effects of paranoia about effeminacy and homosexuality on postwar artists who were female or homosexual or both. Women artists struggled against imputations of femininity in their work, while the roster of gay and lesbian abstract artists whose biographies include suicide attempts and mental hospitals—among them, Forrest Bess (1911–77), Beauford Delany (1901–1979), and Sonia Sekula (1918–63)—stands as depressing testimony to the repressiveness of the era.

Figure 5.3. (*Continued*) figure—revised from a white man in the preliminary drawings—inhibits explicit articulation of homoeroticism. His age and race diminish the image's identification with the artist's circle and counteract implications of intimate contact among like men.

Figure 5.4. Mark Tobey, *Dancing Miners* (c. 1922–27), oil on canvas, Seattle Art Museum, 42.19. © 2010 Artists Rights Society (ARS), New York/ADAGP, Paris.

The repressiveness of the apparently expressive postwar art became a subject for the next generation of avant-garde artists, who took up themes of silence, blankness, and refusal to communicate. Jasper Johns (b. 1930) and Robert Rauschenberg (born Milton Ernest Rauschenberg, 1925–2008) were widely seen as challenging the self-revelatory gestures of Abstract Expressionism. The artist Allan Kaprow recalled that, when Rauschenberg exhibited a series of all-white paintings in 1953, "In the context of Abstract Expressionist noise and gesture, they suddenly brought one face to face with a numbing, devastating silence." Another of Rauschenberg's 1953 works was even more confrontational. His *Erased de Kooning Drawing* is exactly what the title suggests: the marred sheet of paper from which he had erased a drawing by the Abstract Expressionist Willem de Kooning. Rauschenberg's white paintings inspired the composer John Cage to create his famous piano piece, *4′33″*, which is four minutes and thirty-three seconds of silence. This music, like Rauschenberg's art, challenged the belief, fundamental to Abstract Expressionism, that art expresses its creator. Faced with a white canvas, a smudged sheet of paper, or a concert hall where the crowd's muted coughs and shuffling feet become the music, audiences had to recognize a separation between an artwork and its creator, forcing an acknowledgment of their own role in making meaning

Figure 5.5. Mark Tobey, *Biography* (1948), tempera, Stanford University Museum of Art, © 2010 Artists Rights Society (ARS), New York/ ADAGP, Paris. Painted during the decade when Tobey shifted to abstraction, this image thematizes the disappearance of the figure within a veil of abstract marks.

from what they hear or see. For men like Rauschenberg and Cage, whose sexual identities were dangerous to reveal, this critique of art as self-expression offered welcome relief from scrutiny by reflecting inquisitive attention back on itself.

Rauschenberg's art after 1953 continued to refuse self-revelation, but his strategy shifted from displaying blankness to barraging viewers with so many visual cues that assumptions about artistic self-expression are short-circuited. Rauschenberg's "Combines"—large collages of paint strokes, silk-screened reproductions of other images, and stuck-on objects—present an overwhelming array of visual stimuli, much of it found rather than produced by the artist (Figure 5.7). In the context of a Combine, Abstract-Expressionist-style splashes of paint look like one more randomly discovered sign, rather than indices of artistic self-revelation. These works can be analyzed for subtle allusions to homosexuality. The title of *A Pail for Ganymede* (1959), for instance, exaggerates the accessory named in descriptions of Ganymede as Zeus's "cup-bearer," a common euphemism for the youth embraced by this god in Renaissance depictions (as discussed in chapter 2). Jumbling gendered imagery and allusions to gay culture in seemingly random ways, Rauschenberg's Combines put the onus of meaning-making on viewers, challenging audiences to name what they see, confident that few dared broach the topic of homosexuality and that those who could explicate the codes would be revealing their own suspicious sensibility. Hostile critics fell into this trap. Jack Kroll, writing in *Artnews*, attacked Rauschenberg as a "demonaic Baron Corvo" with a "*Harper's Bazaar* sensibility," and denounced his Combines as "the airy dream of a fallen esthete flopped out at the Greenwich Hotel" where a "poof of incense" and a "lavender rust" make audiences "get too close to the artist in the wrong sense." This incoherent barrage of

Figure 5.6. Arnold Newman, *Portrait of abstract expressionist painter Jackson Pollock next to his painting 'Number 9,' New York, January 3, 1949*. Courtesy of Getty Images. This photograph was published across a two-page spread to introduce an article on Pollock in *Life* magazine, August 8, 1949.

allusions to Aestheticism and fashion unwittingly replicates the Combine's verbose reticence, hinting without saying in an avalanche of innuendo that reveals as much about the critic as the art.

Though Rauschenberg's art upset such critics, it fascinated and influenced many viewers, most profoundly an aspiring young artist, Jasper Johns. Like Rauschenberg, with whom he was intimately—though discreetly—partnered between 1954 and 1961, Johns made art that baffled expectations for artistic self-expression. Fame followed his 1954 paintings of the American flag rendered in encaustic, a thick wax that, in Kenneth Silver's apt term, "mummifies" the artist's marks, thus embalming Abstract Expressionists' technique of embodying American-ness through gesture as an outdated mannerism. Johns's subversive wit also animates his *Painting with Two Balls* and *Target with Plaster Casts*, though for a long time his art was analyzed only as a repudiation of Abstract Expressionism's claims for gestural self-expression (Figure 5.8). More recently, analysis by Silver, Jill Johnston, and Jonathan Katz has explicated allusions to gay identity in Johns's art, particularly in his references to the codes used by Demuth and Hartley (discussed in chapter 4), both artists whom Johns admired. Like his predecessors, Johns's art is less an expression of homosexuality than a deployment of codes that dare viewers to make sense of what they see.

The daily experience of homosexuals in the 1950s honed skills of coding. In New York City, laws against "degenerate disorderly conduct" applied to anyone perceived as signaling homosexuality through dress, hairstyle, deportment, or even topics of conversation (two men were arrested on the evidence that they were discussing the opera). Another city law made it a crime for bars to serve alcohol to a homosexual, turning every bartender into a monitor of sexual identity. This is the context for Kenneth Silver's 1992 analysis of Johns's *Target with Plaster Casts* as a "portrait of a homosexual man of the post-war period . . . the besieged gay body—and gay psyche—is fragmented and sorted into compartments, each one capable of being alternately closeted or exposed" (Figure 5.9). Silver's explication, which broke the critical silence around

Figure 5.7. Robert Rauschenberg, *Bantam* (1955), combine painting: oil, paper, printed reproductions, cardboard, fabric, and pencil on canvas, The Eli and Edythe L. Broad Collection, Los Angeles. Art © Estate of Robert Rauschenberg/ Licensed by VAGA, New York, NY. This Combine juxtaposes the masculinity of the title (a bantam is a small male fighter) and the photograph of a baseball team against the femininity suggested by the delicate fabrics, Victorian female nude, and autographed portrait of Judy Garland in

Johns's homosexuality, brings specificity to the artist's more generalized explanations of his practice. Contrasting himself to the Abstract Expressionists, for whom "personal identity and painting were more or less the same," Johns said, "I have attempted to develop my thinking in such a way that the work I've done is not me. . . . I didn't want my work to be an exposure of my feelings. . . . I worked in such a way that I could say it's not me."

Unsurprisingly perhaps, given their commitment to artistic strategies of veiling, coding, and filtering, Johns and Rauschenberg resisted analysis of their art in relation to homosexuality, even when it came from sympathetic critics in the 1980s and after. They would not discuss their sexual identity or its relationship to their work, and both artists tried to prevent scholars from addressing the topic. Such secretiveness itself may be, paradoxically, the clearest expression of homosexual identity in the art of the postwar decades. The question remains, however, why was this secretive art so central to the modernism of the 1950s?

Sexual secrecy in general—and the secret of homosexuality in particular—animated much postwar American culture. Indeed, this era's paradoxical fascination with what it repressed may be its most definitive characteristic. The popular plays of Thomas Lanier "Tennessee"

Williams—most famously *Cat on a Hot Tin Roof* (1955) and *Suddenly Last Summer* (1958), both of which were turned into major Hollywood films—trace the lethal ramifications of a homosexual secret, which is never explicitly named. As the growing middle class defined itself by conformity to rigid standards of social and sexual propriety, newly popular practices ranging from psychoanalysis to detective novels allowed secrets to be revealed within careful bounds. Though homosexuality was not the only behavior repressed during the fifties, its perceived links to political subversion and mental illness—two other categories of repression—contributed to its status as *the* paradigmatic secret. Art historian Jonathan Katz correlates this social climate with Rauschenberg's and Johns's appeal among ambitious middle-class audiences (including dealers, collectors, critics, and museum-goers) who welcomed these artists' subtle experiments with codes, masks, and ambiguous allusions. In what may be the ultimate paradox of a paradoxical era, the gay-coded art of Johns and Rauschenberg became, by the end of the 1950s, the well-publicized artistic expression of a social class defined by its commitment to secrecy.

Figure 5.7. (*Continued*) the upper register. Garland, whose autograph Rauschenberg also included in another Combine, was a symbol of gay culture by the 1950s. Her signature seems to authorize this conflation of masculine and feminine where the border between the genders is crossed by a drippy stroke of paint. *Bantam* exemplifies the way Rauschenberg's art dares viewers to interpret the jumble of elements, especially the paint stroke, which might be expressive—or just a blotch of color.

POPULAR IMAGERY, POP ART, AND THE ORIGINS OF POSTMODERNISM

It couldn't last. The cultural tensions of the 1950s reached a breaking point in the 1960s with the explosion of Pop art. Pop's use of the mass media and popular imagery (hence the name) so fundamentally undermined definitions of modern art as self-expressive and abstract that historians now locate the origins of what we call "postmodernism" in Pop. The preeminent Pop artist was Andy Warhol (born Andrew Warhola, 1930–87). His famous silk-screen prints, notorious films, and celebrity lifestyle are widely cited for changing the public's ideas of art and artists. Less acknowledged is their profound effect on the history of homosexuality.

Until Warhol, the paradigmatic fusion of the artist and the homosexual remained Oscar Wilde, whose sparkling prose seemed to mask the secret of his sexuality: this model continued to motivate both those who forged their own identity in Wilde's image and those who condemned modern art as a plot by degenerates to undermine public virtue. Warhol, in contrast, seemed to mask nothing at all. His life fused with his art, blurring distinctions between public and private. Creating a personal style from commercial images like Coca-Cola bottles and Campbell's Soup cans, Warhol explained that these were things he used every day. At the same time that he personalized public imagery, Warhol's films made public what would usually be private: the erotic and emotional life of people around him. Their posturing as celebrities performing for the camera, however, cast self-revelation as an act of public performance. Inverting the Wildean paradigm where the "secret" of homosexuality

Figure 5.8. Jasper Johns, *Painting with Two Balls* (1960), encaustic and collage on canvas, collection of the artist. Art © Jasper Johns/ Licensed by VAGA, New York, NY. Two steel balls seem about to crack open the surface of this triptych to reveal what is hidden beneath. This suggestion of secrecy is reinforced by the daubs of vibrantly colored encaustic veiling scraps of newspaper print that viewers can almost—but not quite—read. The balls—common slang for gonads and, thus, for masculinity—can be seen as gibes at the machismo of the Abstract Expressionists.

seemed to privilege a personal meaning behind an artist's work, Warhol offered a public spectacle of sexuality so generalized that no individual act or person had meaning apart from a context as broad as mass culture itself, which suddenly seemed to reveal itself as profoundly homoerotic.

The origins of Warhol's art lie in the repressive art world of the 1950s. Trained as a commercial artist, Warhol avoided many of the prohibitions that constrained aspiring avant-garde painters. His delicate drawing style, often captioned in his mother's spidery calligraphy, appealed to advertisers and book publishers, and he established himself as a fashionable New York commercial illustrator who also produced homoerotic sketches and books for sympathetic friends and clients. When, around 1960, Warhol tried to break into the avant-garde, however, New York galleries rejected his homoerotic imagery (Figure 5.10). Warhol's efforts to befriend Rauschenberg and Johns also failed, because, a mutual friend explained, "You're too swish, and that upsets them . . . the *major painters* try to look straight" (Text 5.1). As Warhol recorded this episode—again making public what others would keep private—his confidante explained that being "swish" meant more than effeminate mannerisms; it meant blurring the boundaries that distinguished artists from collectors, and high from commercial art.

When Rauschenberg and Johns designed display windows for department stores like Bonwit Teller, they did so under the false name Matson Jones—though this did not prevent critic Hilton Kramer from condemning, in a 1959 review, the "window decorator's aesthetic" of Rauschenberg's art with the coy assertion that there was "no difference between his work and the decorative displays which often grace the windows of Bonwit Teller." Warhol attacked these hierarchies. As he explained, "In the last part of the fifties, Jasper Johns and Bob Rauschenberg and others had begun to bring art back from abstraction and introspective stuff. Then Pop Art took the inside and put it outside, took the outside and put it inside." His multifaceted career burst through

FROM ANDY WARHOL AND PAT HACKETT, *POPISM: THE WARHOL '60S* (NEW YORK: HARCOURT BRACE JOVANOVICH, 1980), 11–12

De [Emile De Antonio] was such good friends with both Jasper and Bob that I figured he could probably tell me something I'd been wanting to know for a long time: why didn't they like me? Every time I saw them, they cut me dead. So when the waiter brought the brandy, I finally popped the question, and De said, "Okay, Andy, if you really want to hear it straight, I'll lay it out for you. You're too swish, and that upsets them.

I was embarrassed, but De didn't stop. I'm sure he saw that my feelings were hurt, but I'd asked a question and he was going to let me have the whole answer. "First, the post-Abstract Expressionist sensibility is, of course, a homosexual one, but these two guys wear three-button suits–they were in the army or navy or something! Second, you make them nervous because you *collect* paintings, and traditionally artists don't buy the work of other artists, it just isn't done. And third," De concluded, "you're a commercial artist, which really bugs them because when *they* do commercial art . . . they won't even use their real names. Whereas you've won prizes! You're *famous* for it!"

It was perfectly true, what De said. I was well known as a commercial artist. I got a real kick out of seeing my name listed under "Fashion" in a novelty book called *A Thousand New York Names and Where to Drop Them*. But if you wanted to be considered a "serious" artist, you weren't supposed to have anything to do with commercial art. De was the only person I know then who could see past those old social distinctions to the art itself.

What De had just told me hurt a lot. When I'd asked him, "Why don't they like me," I'd naturally hoped to get off easier than this. When you ask a question like that, you always hope the person will convince you you're just being paranoid. I didn't know what to say. Finally I just said something stupid: "I know plenty of painters who are more swish than me." And De said, "Yes, Andy, there are others who are more swish–and less talented–and still others who are less swish and just as talented, but the *major painters* try to look straight; you play up the swish—It's like an armor with you."

There was nothing I could say to that. It was all too true. So I decided I just wasn't going to care, because those were all things that I didn't want to change anyway, that I didn't think I *should* want to change.

the carefully monitored borders that segregated the avant-garde from popular culture. "Once you thought Pop, you could never see America the same way again," Warhol said.

The "look" of homosexuality in Warhol's art, therefore, is not a matter of erudite codes. Nor is it limited to some sex scenes in his films or to his silk screens of handsome male celebrities, both of which are outweighed in number—if not in shock value—by his scenes of heterosexuality and sexy female stars. Warhol rose to fame in the early 1960s with his reproductions of news photographs and product labels. He described Pop's

Figure 5.9. Jasper Johns, *Target with Plaster Casts* (1955), encaustic and collage on canvas, private collection. Art © Jasper Johns/Licensed by VAGA, New York, NY. The target suggests not only the vulnerability of the body revealed or hidden in the compartments above, but associations of gay men with St. Sebastian, who was martyred with arrows (Figures 2.8, 3.20).

commercial imagery as a celebration of "all the great modern things that the Abstract Expressionists tried so hard not to notice at all." To the dismay of art-world insiders, Warhol embellished his soup cans with Abstract-Expressionist-style drips and smudges, implying that these were all commercial symbols. At the same time, his reproductions of news photographs of gruesome suicides and automobile wrecks offered an iconography of death and daring that rivaled the abstract artists' claims to profound themes.

Clearly contesting what it meant for art to be "modern," Warhol's subversive anti-individualism—his sources in mass-media imagery, the mass production of his work by many hands in a studio he called the Factory, its mass marketing, and mass consumption—also challenged the visual signifiers of masculine heterosexuality. Warhol's art flouted the fundamental rules of the American avant-garde, which promoted abstract painting as a unique act of self-expressive individuality indicative of a virile—by which was meant heterosexual—masculinity that dominated its materials in order to create something new. Thus buying art was "swish": the consumption of another man's virility. A 1963 interview shows Warhol challenging these ideas: "All you have to do is read the [art] magazines and the catalogues. It's this style or that style, this or that image of man—but that really doesn't make any difference." Noting the paradox that "everybody is always talking about . . . individuality," Warhol observes, "Those who talk about individuality the most are the ones who most object to deviation." This remark follows an allusion to an article about Cage, Johns, "and that whole crowd, but with a lot of big words like radical empiricism and teleology. Who knows?" Warhol's implication that he would tell a different story about this art is prefaced by a reference to the notorious homoerotic French writer Jean Genet: "When you read Genêt [*sic*] you get all hot, and that makes some people say this is not art. The thing I like about it is that it makes you forget about style and that sort of thing."

Warhol's endorsement of the erotic did not cast homosexuality as the key to Pop's nonprocreative, promiscuous enjoyment of the feminized, unindividualized world of popular visual culture. But hostile critics made the connection. Complaining about Pop in an interview in 1962, the eminent art historian Rudolph Arnheim blamed what he saw as America's "woman-centered society" for producing "an art form that is characterized by the surrender of creativity—where the most characteristic thing is that I take passively from the world in which I live and I copy it passively . . . that this surrender of the masculine quality of creating things . . . has something to do with this element." Other critics of Pop were more explicitly homophobic. A 1968 anthology of journalists' essays on the sixties reported, "homosexual ethics and esthetics are staging a vengeful, derisive counterattack on what deviates call the 'straight' world. This is evident in 'pop,' which reduces art to triviality, and 'camp,' which pretends that the ugly and banal are fun." Two years earlier, the well-known author Vivian Gornick had attacked Pop as "a malicious fairy's joke." Gornick speculated about the new movement's origins: "One has the feeling that it all started one day when a bunch of sweet young things got together after a mad, mad day at the decorators; in sarcastic imitation of the Mrs. Babbitts they serve, the boys began to whoop it up, painting the objects best fitted to describe Mrs. B's crass taste." This condescending fantasy demonstrates how modernists, by the 1960s, had restricted art to expressions of an elite "taste" defined against both popular visual culture (the interior decoration of the Babbitt house, an allusion to the prototypical middle-class man satirized in Sinclair Lewis's 1922 novel, *Babbitt*) and femininity (the "sweet young things" who serve the lady of the house).

Figure 5.10. Andy Warhol, *Two Heads* (c. 1957), oil, spray paint, and ink on canvas, collection of the Andy Warhol Museum, Pittsburgh. © 2010 Artists Rights Society (ARS), New York/ADAGP, Paris. This example of Warhol's pre-Pop paintings, which were rejected by avant-garde galleries, features two men about to kiss, making explicit the gay connotations implied by the background's gender-bending blends of the leopard-skin look of extravagant interior decor with the spray-paint technique associated with more masculine enterprises of graffiti or sign painting.

The popularity of Warhol's art dismayed both promoters of high art and defenders of conventional social mores, though their condemnations of Pop as a symptom of homosexual degeneracy exposed implications of Warhol's work that were probably not obvious to most viewers of his silk-screened soup cans and Marilyn Monroe portraits. What made Pop art especially threatening, however, was what it revealed about popular visual culture. Warhol's quotations from commercial imagery challenged art critics by revealing that, despite the avant-garde's claims to innovation and transgression, changes in twentieth-century culture

were most closely registered outside the tightly monitored network of high-prestige galleries and museums. Before exploring the uses made of popular visual culture by Warhol and the other Pop artists, therefore, it is worthwhile to look to their sources.

In retrospect, it seems obvious that the seismic shifts in—and consequent panics over—sexuality described at the beginning of this chapter could not have left visual culture unaffected, despite the impression given by postwar art magazines. Just as laws to suppress homosexuality increased subcultural identity among those labeled as homosexuals, proscriptions against homoeroticism in art channeled such imagery into non-art forms of popular imagery. The sexologists' linkage of homosexuality with androgyny lent authority to imputations of homosexuality among men in arts associated with female patronage, among them interior decoration, shop-window design, and fashion. Such stereotypes were common enough to appear in prewar Hollywood movies. The 1933 film *Only Yesterday* features an interior decorator who, like the fashionable women in the movie, is oblivious to the men's concern over the stock market crash; as panic fills the streets, he pauses at a shop window to exclaim at "that heavenly blue against that mauve curtain." By 1959, the hit movie *Pillow Talk* could assume that audiences understood why, when the handsome Texan played by Rock Hudson says, "it must be very exciting working with all them colors and fabrics," Doris Day worries that he is homosexual. The irony—apparent only in retrospect—of this gay actor who masqueraded as heterosexual for the sake of his career playing a womanizer who masquerades as gay to lure a woman into greater intimacy exemplifies the complexity of the "open secret" (as discussed in chapter 4) as it functioned to titillate consumers of popular visual culture.

Rauschenberg's and John's anxiety to hide their jobs as shop-window designers and homophobic attacks on Pop artists as interior decorators confirm associations of homosexuality with these professions. Despite the prevalence of such stereotypes, however, the effect of sexual identity on the look of interiors, shop windows, and clothes is hard to assess, partly because art history follows the hierarchies of the arts, so these "minor" arts remain poorly documented and little analyzed, and partly because anxiety over the stereotypes often led to obfuscation of the sexuality of individual designers and decorators. Theatrically extravagant interiors, however, were widely seen as a homosexual aesthetic, and their components might be correlated with stereotypical attributes of male homosexuality: mirrors suggest narcissism, color coordination connotes Aesthetic sensitivity, sumptuous cushions and carpets imply sensual self-indulgence, sculpted male nudes evoke Michelangelo or recall classical sexual mores (described in chapter 1), while a profusion of tiny, fragile bibelots indicates an affinity for artifice that on a practical level seems unsuitable for children and might more metaphorically symbolize ideas of homosexuality as unnatural. Even when—as was usually the case—rehearsals of such stereotypes were intended to be pejorative,

they created a roster of recognizable signs of gay identity. Although often ignored by scholars, associations between the look of high-design interiors and homosexuals—especially as these images were disseminated through popular media, like film—were crucial to the reification of homosexuality as a subculture, or, as it is often put, a "lifestyle."

Stereotypes of effeminate decorators were not the only vision of male homosexuality in popular visual culture, however. A growing gay subculture supported a market for images of homosexuality characterized, in reaction against prevailing stereotypes, by extreme masculinity. The look of "physique" magazines—so called because they were ostensibly devoted to muscle building—helped visualize this alternative idea of homosexual identity and confer on it a locale: southern California. Physique magazines claimed the loosely related rationales of promoting physical fitness and providing models for artists in order to create and circulate images of attractive men displaying their bodies for the pleasure of other men. Though their claim to provide models for artists echoed a rationale cited by *The Studio* back in the 1890s, the boyish ideal of Von Gloeden's era (discussed in chapter 3) gave way to the muscular bodies popularized by sports and "physical culture" magazines that promoted outdoor exercise. One immediate consequence was that sports magazines began rigorously editing out images of affection between men or bodily display that could be construed as homoerotic.

Among the first and most influential of the new physique magazines was *Physique Pictorial*, founded in 1951 by Bob Mizer, a Los Angeles photographer who discovered he could make more money selling photographs of the athletes he recruited in local gyms and beaches for his modeling agency, the Athletic Model Guild, than from his commissions on their modeling jobs. To some extent, *Physique Pictorial* and its many imitators reanimated Victorian associations of homoeroticism with ancient Mediterranean culture. Their nearly naked models sometimes posed with fragments of classical architecture, and one magazine called itself the *Grecian Guild Pictorial*. More often, however, the models were presented as modern American men, complete with crew cuts and tattoos, in Californian settings: in the mountains, on the beach, or amid art deco props that suggested Hollywood movie sets. Although this last setting connected the models to fashionable decoration, their muscular virility challenged stereotypes of homosexual effeminacy. The lightheartedness of many of the images complemented captions offering upbeat biographies of the models, which countered mainstream presentations of homoeroticism as a disease or a crime with announcements of the men's successes in weight-lifting competitions, nightclub acts, and movie roles—and in one case aspirations "to be a missionary for the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-Day Saints." The physique magazines projected an image of a carefree California subculture of virile men from all over America—and eventually the world—united in their easy acceptance of homoerotic camaraderie.

This ideal was far from the whole truth. Reporters wrote exposés on "magazines that cater to homosexual perverts"; congressmen railed against those who "pandered to homosexuals by depicting 'the male body beautiful'"; the post office curtailed the circulation of physique magazines; and law-enforcement officials prosecuted the magazines' publishers. The magazines responded with spirited editorials praising the anticensorship work of the American Civil Liberties Union, decrying judges and the police, mocking the "Anti-Pleasure League," which has its headquarters in "Lieington, District of Calumny (also with avid representatives in every town and city)," and associating their readers—what the *Grecian Guild Pictorial* called its "brotherhood of body-builders, artists, physique students, and others"—with a commonsense, antiauthoritarian individualism of the common man. "We have received a number of indignant letters from veterans who ask why they were asked to lay down their lives for the principles of individual freedom in America only to return and find a number of officials in office who now want to deprive them of that freedom in such fields of nebulous interpretation of what is 'acceptable' in art, photography, etc.," reported *Physique Pictorial*. Without identifying their contributors or subscribers as homosexual, a 1956 editorial on "Homosexuality and Bodybuilding" offered readers a repertoire of clever responses to homophobic gibes, and mocked critics whose "apparent intimate acquaintance with homosexuality" is revealed by the way they "seem to be preoccupied with the subject" (Figure 5.11). Responding with the folksy principle "we wonder if really good people show prejudice against any minority group," the editors suggested that "those who want factual information about the so-called homosexual problem" send a self-addressed stamped envelope to a gay-rights journal like *One*. Casting appreciation of male beauty as a bond among working-class men indifferent or contemptuous toward medical and legal authority and middle-class sexual and racial mores, the magazines marketed their subscriptions as "memberships" in "guilds," inviting readers to imagine themselves as part of a community. Not since the late-nineteenth-century writings of Whitman, Carpenter, and Symonds had homoeroticism been cast as the basis for such community, but the physique magazines' growing circulation—estimated at three quarters of a million by the mid-1960s—reflected a yearning for this understanding. Although physique magazines affected a working-class contempt for the frankly gay middle-class subcultures that began to emerge (with their own magazines) in the 1960s, many of the visual signifiers of contemporary gay identity—emphasized musculature, humorous self-display with the accouterments of mid-century Hollywood, the eroticization of clothes associated with American working-class men—reflect the influence of the images disseminated by physique magazines in the 1950s.

Art was central to the aesthetic of the physique magazines. The second issue of *Physique Pictorial* opened by drawing attention to the magazine's title, noting that the first issue had been titled *Physique Photo News* and

explaining the change because "the booklet is to contain offerings of paintings as well as photographs." A recurring column, "Tips For The Amateur Physique Photographer," asserted that "Michael-Angelo's paintings on the ceiling of the Sistine chapel in the Vatican were decried as vulgar in his day, and some artistically bankrupt judges of our own time have labeled photographs 'indecent' which were exact duplicates of poses from the chapel." Physique magazines used rhetorics of "artistic license" to justify reproducing artists' drawings and paintings that were often more suggestive of homoerotic interaction than the photographs. Among the best known of these artists was George Quaintance (c. 1915–57), who presented his work in Whitmanesque terms as a project to bring together different types of men: the "young Mexican Matador of today," the "young California giant," and the "Levi boy" (the latter a reference to the brand of workman's trousers popularized by gay fashion to their current ubiquity) (Figure 5.12). "The world is indeed fortunate for the neo-aestheticism being introduced into our lives by such great artists as Quaintance," opined *Physique Pictorial*.

Figure 5.11. Page from *Physique Pictorial* (Fall 1956), featuring a drawing of construction workers by Art-Bob above an editorial noting that *Iron Man Magazine* has "sounded the alarm that homosexuals are invading the body building field and that 'this evil must be stamped out.'" The

American physique magazines were ambitious to claim an international reach. By the last issue of 1955, *Physique Pictorial* listed subscription offices in many European countries, as well as China and Japan. The existence of an international readership for these magazines is registered by their most successful illustrator, Touko Laaksonen (1920–91), a Finn, whose highly finished drawings of American lumberjacks, motorcyclists, policemen, and cowboys first appeared in *Physique Pictorial* in 1957. "Tom of Finland" extrapolated from the costumes and scenarios he saw in physique magazines, boosting their erotic charge to surreal levels in his illus-

Figure 5.11. (*Continued*) *Physique* editor speculates, "We wonder if this quality is more to be found among bodybuilders than in any other segment of our population."

trations (Figure 5.13). His influence transcended the physique magazines. By the end of his career, reproductions of his drawings were widely marketed as postcards and calendars, while his original drawings were sold in art galleries. His influence extended to the look of pop-music stars such as Freddie Mercury and the Village People.

While physique magazines exploited the authority of art by borrowing rhetorics of "beauty" and "inspiration," "collectors" and "limited editions," artists reciprocated with fascination for the frank eroticism of these mass-circulated images. Two British painters, Francis Bacon (1909–1992) and David Hockney (b. 1937), took up physique photography in very different ways.

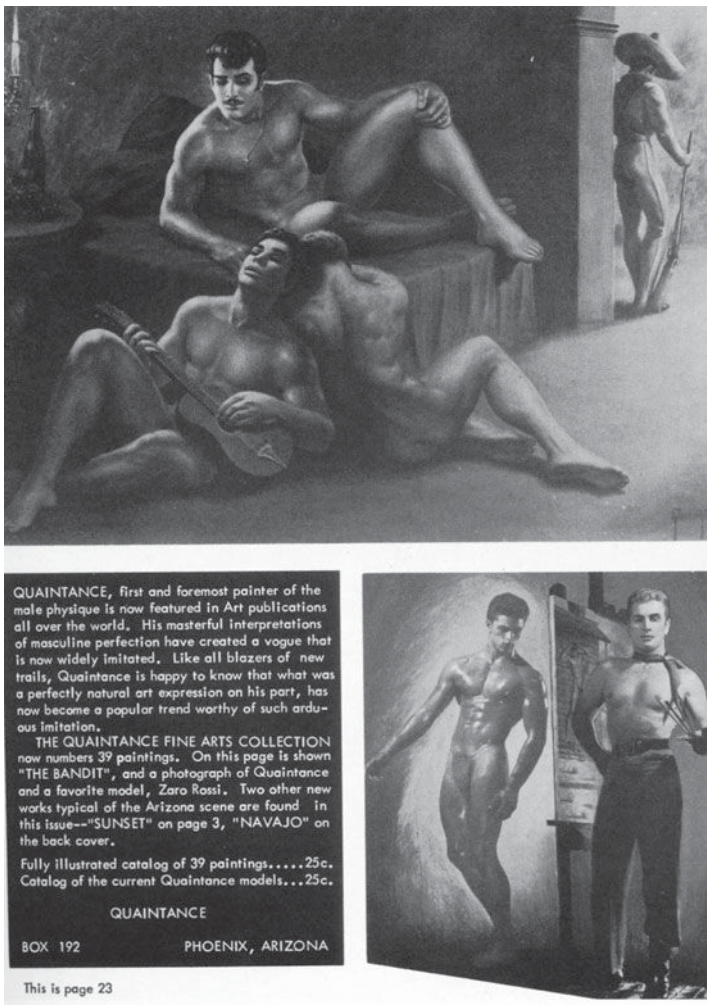


Figure 5.12. George Quaintance, advertisement from *Physique Pictorial* (March 1954). Quaintance claims both the authority of "Art" and the authenticity of his representations of the "Arizona scene." Typically, he depicts himself painting

As a young man just back in London after living in Berlin and Paris, Bacon in the early 1930s was beginning a career in furniture design when he fell into a discreetly gay circle around the expatriate Australian painter Roy de Maistre (1894–1968). De Maistre encouraged Bacon to develop a surrealist style that revealed shocking or violent emotions latent in normal-looking newspaper photographs. This approach sustained Bacon through a long and successful career of paintings that subverted existing images from famous portraits to casual snapshots (Figure 5.14). One important category of source images for Bacon was athletic photography. He made use of magazines like *Physique Pictorial,* and told an interviewer, "I look all the time at photographs in magazines of footballers and boxers and all that kind of thing—especially boxers." Bacon explained how he fused these images with memories of bodies he had known personally and with other images he remembered. Bacon's repertory drew heavily on Michelangelo's drawings—"Michelangelo made the most voluptuous male nudes in the plastic arts," he said—and the photographic motion studies of Eadward Muybridge (1830–1904), especially his wrestlers, which "appear, unless you look at them under a microscope, to be in some form of sexual embrace."

Despite Bacon's clearly homoerotic imagery, however, this aspect of his art was long ignored by critics and scholars. Recent commentary is franker about the relationship between Bacon's paintings and their homoerotic visual and biographical sources, but art history has shown no appetite for considering how this imagery related to his acclaim at mid-century. Cleaving to the era's imperative toward abstraction, Bacon and his admirers denied any narrative implication for his imagery, but his consistent emphasis on the grotesque and destructive—details like hypodermic needles, swastikas, and what look like pools of blood—reinforces the grim visions of homosexuality promulgated by doctors, journalists, and other experts at the period. This implicit appeal became explicit in 1975 in the first article to address "the homosexual aspect of Bacon's art." Here the American critic Donald Kuspit interpreted Bacon's imagery in terms of "three homosexual traits…as articulated by [Jean Paul] Sartre": "fake submission," the "estheticism" that supposedly stems from the self-directed eroticism of homosexuality ("he regularly and maliciously insists on purely esthetic significance" Kuspit said), and "the homosexual's artificialism, which finalizes his estheticism." Adopting the pathologizing tone of the experts, Kuspit essentialized the limitations of "the homosexual aspect of Bacon's art" (the awkward phrase is repeated) using the paradigm of anal sex: because "homosexual penetration" never "achieves ultimate possession of the object[,] its reality is always discovered to be turned away from one, and wherever one has entered it, one finds that one is facing a behind. One always has an obscene, exaggerated, yet radically incomplete and inconclusive relationship with it, and one finds degenerating into an appearance which cannot reference anything but itself." Thus, "Bacon's portraits, in the end, communicate no sense of character."

Figure 5.12. (*Continued*) "a favorite" model, offering his viewers an ideal of an eroticized community of men.

Figure 5.13. *Physique Pictorial* (February 1968), cover illustration by Tom of Finland.

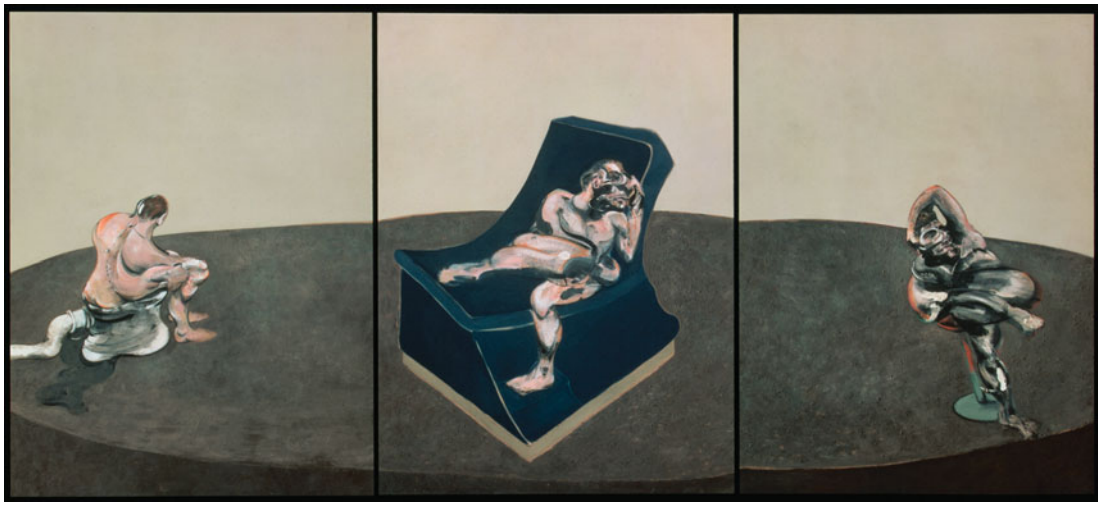


Figure 5.14. Francis Bacon, *Three Figures in a Room* (1964), triptych, oil on canvas, Musée National d'Art Moderne, Centre Georges Pompidou, Paris. Photo credit: CNAC/MNAM/Dist. Réunion des Musées Nationaux/Art Resource, NY. The sequence of male nudes on the toilet, grappling on a couch, and posing on a pedestal, links casual camaraderie, sex, and art on a homoerotic continuum.

Kuspit, drawing on Sartre, was not extraordinary in his homophobia. His was the dominant discourse of the avant-garde, which, pushed to acknowledge the existence of gay artists, deployed the mechanisms of critical analysis to establish the art world's consensus with the prevailing medical and legal opinion. The vocabulary was less abstruse, but the dynamic remained consistent through the posthumous biographies of Bacon and a 1999 movie about him, *Love Is the Devil*, all of which emphasize the impact of alcohol, drugs, and violence on Bacon's life to the neglect of the calculation and control that is clearly evident in his paintings. Ross Bleckner, a younger gay painter (discussed in chapter 6), has described how for years he resisted Bacon's influence: "I couldn't separate the mental image of him that was in my head—drunk and bloated and ugly—from the pictures of his paintings that were in my head—explicit, sadomasochistic, bloody, scatological—from the paintings themselves—raw and powerful." Historians still shy away from analyzing the opposite phenomenon: how the avant-garde delighted in—and rewarded Bacon handsomely for devoting his formidable talents to creating—images of homoeroticism as degradation.

David Hockney's bright paintings are not obviously related to Bacon's darkly elegant images. As a student in London in 1960, however, Hockney was inspired by the provocative mix of abstraction and figuration in Bacon's work, which he discovered at exactly the time when, encouraged by an American student at his art school, he openly acknowledged his homosexuality. Hockney borrowed both Bacon's quotations from Muybridge and expressive dark smudging when he introduced figures into his abstract paintings at what he later recalled was the "exciting moment" when he realized he could use his art as a way to "come out." (Hockney's terminology reflects the influence of 1960s gay-liberation ideology, which coined the expression "come out of the closet" to mean forthright acknowledgment of one's homosexuality.) Hockney's art-school paintings record his self-conscious effort to ally himself with a legacy of homosexual artists. His

titles—often written into the paintings as part of the composition—quote or refer to homosexual poets W. H. Auden, Constantine Cavafy, and especially Walt Whitman (Figure 5.15). These paintings recall Marsden Hartley's coded references to homosexuality (discussed in chapter 4), but the simplicity of Hockney's code (1 = A, 2 = B, 3 = C, etc.) and his pervading cheerfulness convey less secrecy and more hope. One painting title, *We Two Boys Together Clinging* (1961), quotes Whitman's poetry, but also alludes to a newspaper headline, "TWO BOYS CLING TO CLIFF ALL NIGHT LONG," on a story about a hiking accident, which Hockney wittily reimagined as a sexual fantasy involving the handsome pop-music star Cliff Richards. In all these works, Hockney's optimism about gay identity is suggested by richly colored figures of lovers who stand out against drab backgrounds scrawled with graffiti, as if to claim the potential for emotional connection and sexual delight even in bleak surroundings.

Figure 5.15. David Hockney, *Adhesiveness* (1960), oil on board. © David Hockney. Photo by Paul Oszwald. The simple numeric coding of the alphabet identifies the interpenetrating cartoon figures as DH (David Hockney) and WW (Walt Whitman), the latter wearing an old-fashioned black hat.

American physique magazines were crucial to Hockney's optimistic view of gay identity. Fascinated by accounts of gay subcultures in the United States, Hockney used prize money from a printmaking competition to visit New York in the summer of 1961. There he dyed his hair blond in an effort to, in his term, "reinvent" himself. His subsequent paintings were frankly figural and often overtly homoerotic. In 1962 he provoked a controversy at his art school by meeting the requirement that students render the nude with a copy of a *Physique Pictorial* illustration, titling it *Life Painting for a Diploma*. When in 1963 Hockney painted *Domestic Scene, Los Angeles* without ever having been to California, the imagery was drawn, he recalled, "from a photograph in *Physique Pictorial* where there's a boy with a little apron tied round his waist scrubbing the back of another boy in a rather dingy American room; I thought, that's what a domestic scene must be like there.... California in my mind was a sunny land of movie studios and beautiful semi-naked people" (Figure 5.16). Late in 1963, Hockney moved to California, where reality did not dim his

enthusiasm. His paintings of suburban Los Angeles idealize its low-slung houses, mechanically sprinkled yards, palm trees, fancy bathrooms, and, most famously, swimming pools populated with attractive men. Hockney's shower and pool pictures continued to quote photographs he now acquired in person at the physique magazines' headquarters, mixing them with his own snapshots of familiar friends and places as if to fuse his own life with mass-media fantasy.

Hockney's urge to document the life he delighted in prompted his turn to photography as an art in itself. To evoke a sense of time passing, Hockney in the 1980s began to combine snapshots of a single scene into complex collages that depict his friends, parents, domestic life, and travels from various angles (Figure 5.17). Again, Hockney emphasized this work's origins in popular gay imagery, presenting his collages as correctives to the usual "erotic photographs," which, he said, lacked the "life" he defined as "lived time." Expanding beyond the sexy poses of physique photography, Hockney's photo collages suggest how homosexuality, affirmed as an identity, is not totalizing, but is enmeshed in other aspects of life. Mainstream newspapers, novels by gay writers, and porn magazines lie indiscriminately on tabletops in Hockney's interiors. By the same token, portraits of children and heterosexual couples mix with images of Hockney's lovers and gay mentors and friends, among

Figure 5.16. David Hockney, *Domestic Scene, Los Angeles* (1963), oil on canvas. © David Hockney.

Figure 5.17. David Hockney, *Bob Rauschenberg Speaking at the Paper Conferance [sic], Kyoto, Feb 21st 1983*, photographs and ink drawings on paper. © David Hockney. This collage suggests a complex and ambiguous relationship between art and sexual identity and mass-media imagery. Here Rauschenberg is recorded by numerous photographers who will disperse their images of the famous artist, while Hockney's multiple photographs record his perspective as art. Amid this public circulation of photographs of and as "art," Hockney's handmade drawings suggest a more personal mode of identification between the men being scrutinized in their orientation around a phallic microphone.

them another California transplant, the novelist Christopher Isherwood, whose *Berlin Stories* (as noted in chapter 4) had provided another kind of record of gay culture between the wars.

This documentary impulse also lies behind the film *A Bigger Splash*, titled after one of Hockney's swimming pool pictures, shot in 1971 with the goal of exploring the links between his life and his art. Partly scripted reenactment and partly spontaneous documentary, the film became, to Hockney's chagrin, a painful record of the end of a long-term romantic relationship. *A Bigger Splash* makes for provocative comparison on several levels with *Love Is the Devil*, the posthumous dramatization of Francis Bacon's artistic and erotic life. Like Hockney's art, the film about him records, without sensationalizing, his homosexuality. As Hockney and his lover struggle over conflicting desires and ambitions, their doomed relationship emerges as groundbreaking, paradoxically, in its banality. Stripping away the veils of symbolism and abstraction from the image of love between men, the film shows their relationship as one more romance gone awry. Also striking in *A Bigger Splash* is the complex relationship among various kinds of identity—artist or patron, Englishman or Californian, homo- or heterosexual—and their mediation through mass culture. People in the film sometimes seem to act from deep personal motives and at other times clearly perform conventional roles for the camera. Most often, they straddle these extremes in ways that exemplify how our actions often repeat images picked up from the mass media. Taken as a whole, Hockney's career offers a sustained, often prescient, reflection on the conditions of gay identity as experienced by many men during the last third of the twentieth century.

Hockney's placid negotiation of the relationships among the mass media, art, and sexual identity returns our attention to Andy Warhol, whose career presents a more extreme exploration of these issues. Warhol inverted the art world's paradoxical rehearsal of a narrow range of behaviors as evidence of individualism, insisting that his notoriously odd life and art made him typical in an era when, he famously predicted, everyone would be famous for at least fifteen minutes. The relationship of the mass media, art, and sexual identity is clearly at issue in Warhol's films. His first film, *Sleep* (1963), documents a man asleep, the camera circling his naked body like an obsessed lover for more than five hours. Subsequent films with such self-explanatory titles as *Haircut* and the notorious *Blow Job* also offer an obsessive gaze at young men (Figure 5.18). Presenting his work as a distillation of trends in popular culture, rather than a personal expression, Warhol claimed his films simply extended the voyeuristic dynamics in popular movies: "People usually just go to the movie to see only the star, to eat him up, so here at last is a chance to look only at the star for as long as you like, no matter what he does, and to eat him up all you want to." During the 1960s, Warhol's films evolved to document the circle of fashionably disheveled young people who gathered at his Factory, talking, kissing, bickering, having sex, using drugs, dancing, or just sitting and staring. Mimicking Hollywood's culture of celebrity, the stars of Warhol's films—including at least one physique magazine model—competed for attention from one another and from Warhol's camera, which seemed neutrally to record the world around him. By the late sixties, the Factory was producing feature-length films that satirized Hollywood movies and included a great deal of erotic interaction, both hetero- and homosexual. With plots usually set in Warhol's milieu (the exceptions, his westerns with their prancing cowboys, are so obviously artificial that they also look like art-world performances), these nominally fictional films suggested documentary insight into a new urban subculture. Despite instances of censorship, these feature-length films circulated in urban theaters that were beginning to advertise to gay audiences. Although mainstream art critics often cited Pop's popularity in announcing the death of an avant-garde they mourned as the embodiment of elite taste, to his fans Warhol's Factory seemed to revive the avant-garde's original claims to constitute the leading edge of cultural change.

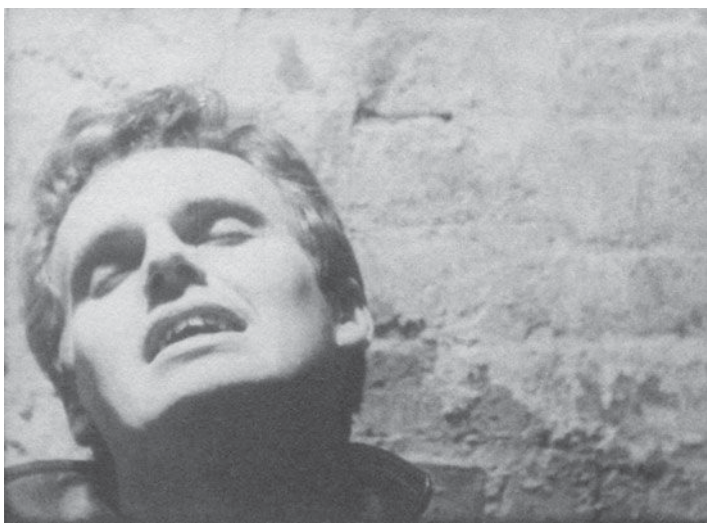


Figure 5.18. Andy Warhol, still from the film *Blow Job* (1964), The Andy Warhol Museum, Pittsburgh, Pennsylvania.

Warhol's personification of shocking new trends in American culture was epitomized when, in 1968, Valerie Solanas, a self-described "social propagandist" among the numerous hangers-on at his Factory, attempted to assassinate him. Shot twice, he was declared dead, then revived. This took place one day before presidential candidate Robert Kennedy was killed, and two months after Martin Luther King's assassination, timing that included Warhol in widespread perceptions that people who stood for social change in America were marked for violent death. In this turbulent era, the lines between metaphorical and actual violence blurred. When in 1970 Vivian Gornick (quoted earlier attacking Pop as "a malicious fairy's joke") sponsored the publication of Solanas's "SCUM Manifesto" (SCUM stood for the Society for Cutting Up Men), she praised it as an expression of "not atypical, but archetypical . . . female experience." Here, women's anger at sexism justifies murderous impulses toward a gay man. While some feminists cited male homosexuality as the epitome of men's patriarchal privileging of other men, however, that same patriarchy condemned gay men for being too much like women. Warhol was at the center of this conflict. Although his art is often admired for exploiting the waves of cultural change in the 1960s, Warhol himself could be seen as a victim of these forces.

Warhol's art after his long recovery has attracted varying appraisals. He stopped making films and in 1972 removed his extant films from circulation. Shifting his explicitly homoerotic imagery to his silk screens, however, Warhol's 1977 *Torso* series repeated images of male nudes in the manner of his earlier soup cans, demonstrating the links he asserted between pornography and other commodities: "All you had to do was figure out what turned you on, and then just buy the dirty magazines and movie prints that are right for you, the way you'd go for the right pills or the right cans of food." His 1978 *Oxidization* series offered an even more provocative challenge to lingering associations of masculinity with Abstract-Expressionist-style brushwork. Warhol evoked Jackson Pollock's all-over paintings by urinating (with his studio assistants) on copper panels, which oxidized in drippy patterns. Warhol continued to feel slighted by the art world, however, which, having quickly absorbed his challenging work during the 1960s, now treated him as old-fashioned. The prestigious Museum of Modern Art never accorded this most influential of twentieth-century artists an exhibition during his lifetime.

MoMA's spurning of Warhol suggests how fundamentally Pop challenged the values of modernism with which this museum was associated. In the 1960s, Clement Greenberg ignored Warhol and dismissed Pop as mere "Novelty Art" that was "masquerading as challenging, advanced art." Two decades later, the New York art critic Hilton Kramer (quoted above disparaging Rauschenberg's "window decorator's aesthetic") bemoaned the collapse of modernism's "authority" in an era "that saw Andy Warhol emerge as the very model of the new

artist-celebrity." By then, Warhol had replaced MoMA as exemplary of what was current in an art world widely described as "postmodern."

Postmodernism challenged modernism's insistence on abstraction in art with linguistic and social theories that emphasized the cultural and historical forces that inform our experiences of the world and, most profoundly, of ourselves. Unlike modernists who treated identity as a preexisting entity that can be intuitively expressed, postmodernists saw identity as an ongoing engagement with languages, including visual signs. Postmodern ideas, therefore, fundamentally challenged modernism's investment in an ideal of authenticity. In the architecture and design of Le Corbusier and other modernists (discussed in chapter 4), historical styles were characterized as forms of fakery and the look of a building or a piece of furniture demonstrated authenticity by revealing its function. In Clement Greenberg's aesthetic theories, modern paintings and sculptures had to express the authentic nature of their materials and to demonstrate the processes by which they were created, thereby revealing an emotional authenticity on the part of the artist. Postmodernists rejected such claims to authenticity as naive. Instead, they conceived of an artwork's accomplishment—like an individual's sense of identity—as a reworking of systems of verbal or visual signification. In a culture saturated with mass-media images, many of these signs will derive from these sources. For this reason, Pop artists like Hockney and Warhol, who frankly quoted mass-media sources, became paradigms of postmodernism.

CAMP AND CRITICISM

The complex relationship between homosexuality and postmodernism as it developed during the last third of the twentieth century is taken up in the following chapters. Here it is appropriate to conclude by considering the relationship between homosexuality and modernism's demise. On the most basic level, what this history reveals is the enormous subversive power modernists assigned to homosexuality. For critics of all stripes, homosexuality served as both the symbol and explanation of any threat to whatever order they sought to uphold. Despite the fact that, in the immediate postwar years, homosexuality was blamed for abstraction's subversion of realism, now modernists blamed homosexuals for modernism's collapse. Hilton Kramer in 1985 revived the homophobic rhetoric of Pop's first outraged critics to blame "the attitude of irony we call Camp" for undermining modernism's "seriousness." Citing Warhol as the "outstanding example" of a "camp" artist and John Cage as its musical exemplar, Kramer asserted that "the origin of camp is to be found in the subculture of homosexuality. Camp humor derives, in its essence, from the homosexual's recognition that his condition represents a kind of joke on nature." Although clearly intended as pejorative, this stereotype confers extraordinary subversive power on the "camp"

sensibility associated with homosexual identity. This power is worth considering as part of a more affirmative history of homosexuality. To what extent did people excluded from the mainstream learn to see the attributes of normalcy, not as authentic, but as a system of signs? Might an outsider's perspective render the increasingly strenuous production of those signs increasingly absurd? And might the pleasure and solidarity created by that shared sense of absurdity ultimately overwhelm the "seriousness" promised by a modernism that had so narrowed the acceptable ranges of both art and masculinity?

These are speculative questions, which different readers will answer in different ways. The fact remains, however, that the term *camp*, although it had appeared in journalism since the 1920s, burst into art criticism in the mid-1960s and immediately achieved ubiquity as a way of summing up—for good or ill—trends in art. The first and highly influential theorization of the concept was Susan Sontag's 1964 essay "Notes on Camp," which credited two outsider groups, homosexuals and Jews, as the "pioneering forces" behind this "modern sensibility." Sontag's essay, which is dedicated to Oscar Wilde, describes camp as a "mode of Aestheticism" that "sees everything in quotation marks." Tracing camp's origins to Wilde's humorous epigrams, Sontag called camp "Dandyism in the age of mass culture" and identified its influence on a wide variety of cultural products, including Pop. Subsequent writers have quarreled with Sontag's essay, citing her preference for unwitting or naive manifestations of camp, her silence on gay subcultural development, and her consequent blindness to camp's political potential. In fairness, Sontag's numbered list of observations promises something more and less than a clear definition or coherent argument, and it was exactly this open-endedness that allowed the rapid spread of the term to signify an aesthetic associated with, but not limited to, homosexuals. By 1966, another critic responding to Sontag's "now famous" essay described camp as "androgynous . . . delighting also in various kinds of inversions other than sexual ones" and insisted, "This is not to say that all campy people are homosexual"; instead, he concurred with Sontag, it was a situation of "peculiar affinity and overlap."

The need for such a broad term may be the strongest evidence of the changing relationship of homosexuality to art. No longer, as in Wilde's Aestheticism, a secret masked by codes, camp sensibilities now seemed a paradigm for new art. With this new openness about camp, however, homosexuality was, to some extent, de-sexed. The rise of terms like *camp* and *gay* marks the triumph of sexology's claim that sexual identity constitutes a fundamental human type, with its own aesthetic, even as it wrenches definitions of sexual identity away from bodies and erotic practices. To some observers, this diffusion of styles associated with homosexuality was (and is) symptomatic of a degeneration in social values. To others, the dilution of specifically homosexual cultural codes and the close-knit communities they helped foster is cause for regret. In

either case, the rise of "camp" at first functioned as another episode in the avant-garde's exploitation of the "open secret" of homosexuality (as discussed at the end of chapter 4) to benefit male artists with the identifiable heterosexual credentials of wives and children. As mainstream a venue as *Newsweek* magazine in 1966 praised the painter Larry Rivers as "the perfect camper . . . whose life is an affectionate parody of yesteryear's sophisticated values. That's what is called 'camp' nowadays." *Newsweek* did not explain, however, that—despite his heterosexual credentials—Rivers's fascination with camp involved him both socially and sexually in New York's gay subculture.

The dominant culture's exploitation of the aesthetic richness of gay culture at the same time that it persecuted homosexuals would soon be challenged by more politically militant versions of homosexuality, first from women inspired by feminism, then from men imperiled by AIDS. These too would have profound effects on art, as discussed in the following chapter.

CHAPTER 6

THE AVANT-GARDE AND ACTIVISM, 1965–82

ART AND POLITICS

The 1960s figure in social history as a period of revolutionary change. But you would never guess that from conventional art history. The exclusions (described in the previous chapter) that, by the 1950s, had narrowed avant-garde practice to performances of masculine individualism pushed the art world to the rear guard when it came to the social and political reforms of the 1960s. The civil rights movement in the United States, which gained momentum during the late fifties and was almost unignorable during the sixties, remained practically invisible in avant-garde American art of this period. There were a few exceptions in the work of gay Pop artists, such as Andy Warhol's *Race Riot* silk screens (1963) and Robert Indiana's *Alabama* (1965), but critics at the time analyzed this imagery as about the news media, rather than race.

Art-world authorities also ignored the upsurge in feminist activism during the sixties and early seventies. To judge from the textbooks for college art-history courses, the masculinization of art actually intensified during the 1960s. Although the first three editions of the popular *Gardner's Art Through the Ages* (published in 1926, 1936, and 1948) included substantial numbers of women artists in the chapters on modern art, the 1970 edition, revised to imitate Horst Jansen's influential new *History of Art* (published in 1962), eliminated all references to women artists along with the earlier editions' coverage of design and of artists outside Europe and the United States. Following Jansen, the

revised *Gardner's* replaced discussions of the social meanings of art and design with a history of modern art presented as a contest among white men waged in terms of abstract form and style.

It's a similar story with the art world's attitude toward sexual identity. Although by 1963, under the headline "Growth of Overt Homosexuality in City Provokes Wide Concern," the *New York Times* reported that "sexual inverts" had "colonized . . . the creative and performing arts" as well as the fashion industry, art journals acknowledged no such trend. Nor did they acknowledge the 1969 Stonewall riots (so called after the New York City bar where patrons rebelled against police harassment), even though these took place at the heart of the artists' neighborhood of Greenwich Village.

Twenty years later, the art press barely noticed an exhibition titled *Imagining Stonewall,* organized by the Lesbian and Gay Community Services Center a few blocks from the site. As Robert Atkins pointed out in a review in the *Village Voice*, "Conditions at the center couldn't have been more unlike those of the professional art world: gay artists got the opportunity to come out in their work; nongay artists (about a quarter of the total . . .) got to work within a gay environment; and gay artists accustomed to exhibiting in pristine galleries had to adjust to the funky, cluttered spaces." Here, to mark the riots' twentieth anniversary, Thomas Lanigan-Schmidt (b. 1948) created *Mother Stonewall and the Golden Rats*, a two-part installation centered on a text recalling his own memories of the events of 1969. Lanigan-Schmidt's handwritten text explains that, at the time of the Stonewall riots, "nobody thought of it as History, Herstory, My-Story, Your-Story, or our-story," because the bar called the Stonewall Inn catered to outsiders: drag-queens and poor, young "street rats" like himself. He concluded, "THAT NIGHT The 'Gutter (Street) Rats' shone like the brightest Gold! And like that baby born in a feed-troft (a manger) or found by Pharoes [*sic*] daughter in a basket floating down the river Nile, the mystery of history happened again in the Least likely of Places." In a busy hallway on the main floor, this text was framed with sparkly pink hearts and juxtaposed with phrases evocative of religious ceremonies and quotations from Oscar Wilde (Figure 6.1). In a stairwell in the back of the building, a procession of golden rats led from another copy of Lanigan-Schmidt's text out the window and outside onto a roof. The simplicity of Lanigan-Schmidt's memoir, photocopies of which were available for viewers to take away, contrasts with intimations of religious and historical transcendence suggested by the quotations and by images worked out in the artist's homemade-baroque aesthetic of sequins, sparkles, and gold. This mixture of the grandiose and the mundane, which the artist compares fondly to the "small town Benedictine" religious services he grew up with, celebrates the legacy of the Stonewall riots in a camp aesthetic redolent of the history of gay culture.

This artistic reflection on Stonewall had to wait twenty years and was sited outside of any art-world setting. Response from within the art world was slower and more cautious. On the tenth anniversary of Stonewall in

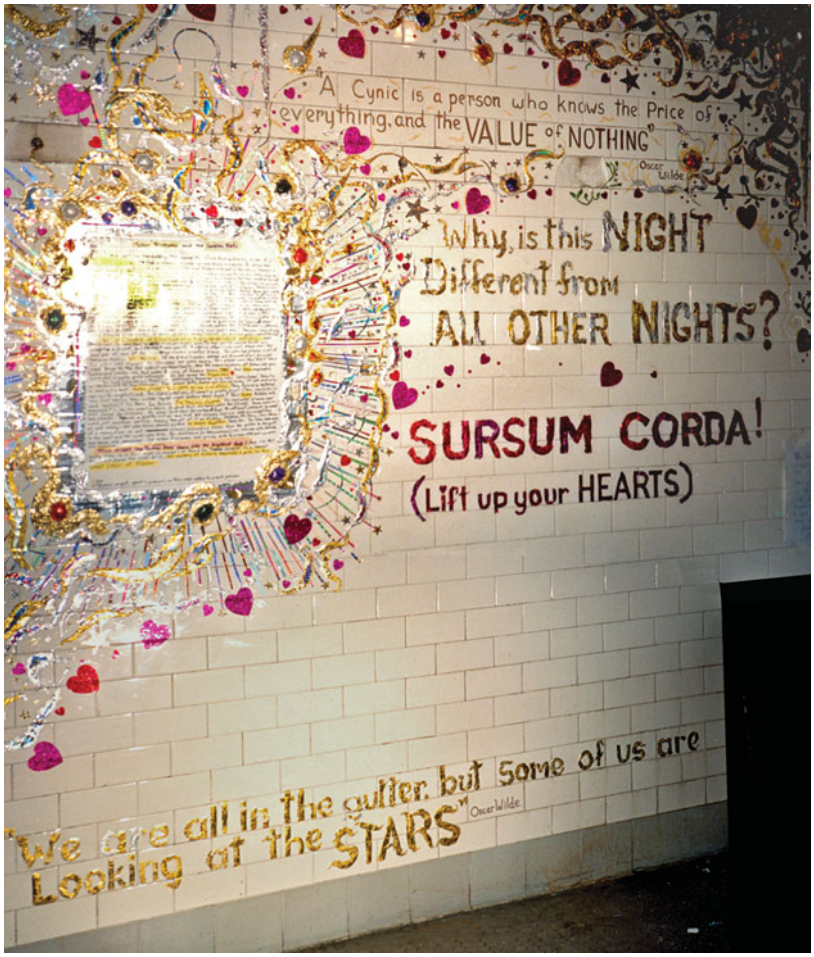


Figure 6.1. Thomas Lanigan-Schmidt, *Mother Stonewall and the Golden Rats* (1989), installation at the Lesbian and Gay Community Services Center, New York. Photographs (digitally stitched into a single image) courtesy of the Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual, and Transgender Community Center National History Archives.

1979, the *Gay Liberation* monument that now occupies the small park opposite the Stonewall Inn was commissioned, but it was not installed until 1992 (Figure 6.2). Initially, the sculptor Louise Nevelson (1900–88) accepted the commission, "remarking almost gleefully that she had grown too old and too famous for anyone to hurt her at this stage in her career," one insider reported. Nevelson's "business advisors," however, persuaded her that public affirmation of her lesbianism would hurt the career of her younger lover, also an artist, so she pulled out. None of the other prominent, but closeted, artists approached by the foundation that provided the major funding for the work was willing to be identified with a project frankly affirming homosexuality. The commission, therefore, went to the heterosexual George Segal (1924–2000).

Segal had long been friendly with John Cage, Robert Rauschenberg, and other gay artists inspired by Marcel Duchamp, though he distinguished himself as a "squat and thick-necked, heavy and visceral" interloper among these "slender, cerebral, philosophic, iconoclastic" dandies. Segal's interest was not in Duchamp's play with sexual codes, but in his use of everyday

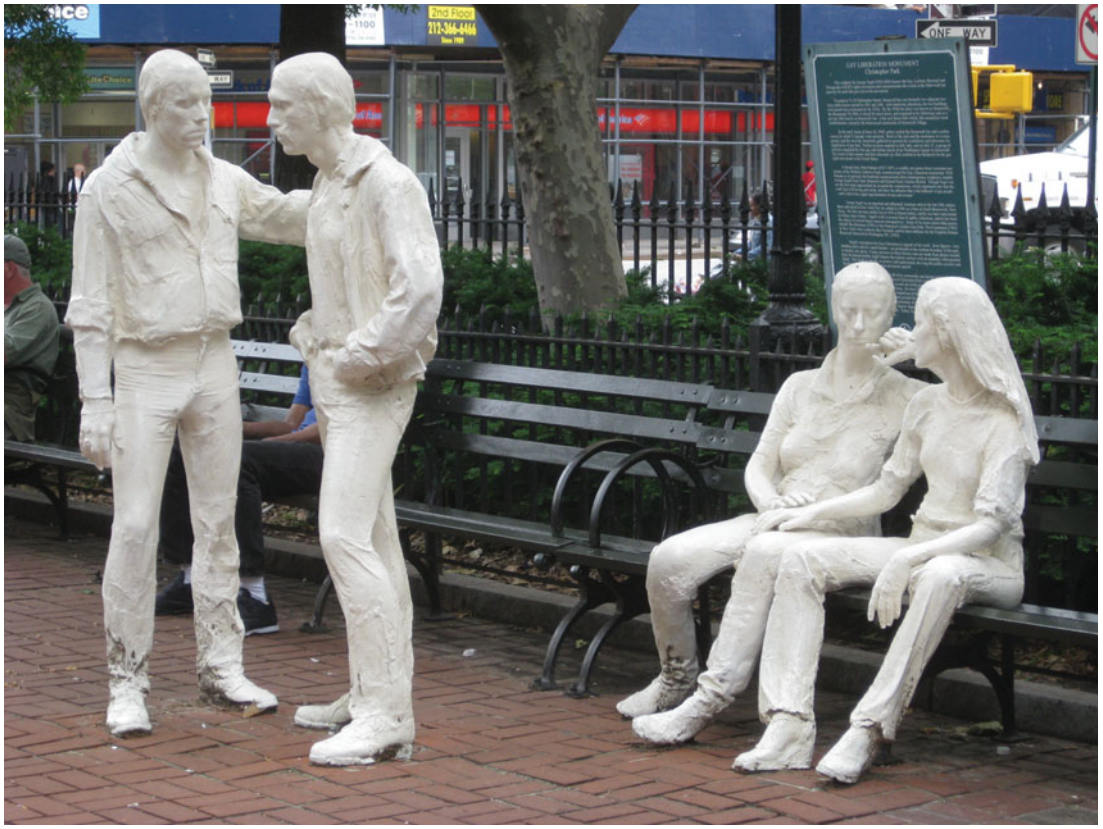


Figure 6.2. George Segal, *Gay Liberation* (1980), white bronze and park benches, in Christopher Park, New York City. Photograph by Christopher Reed. A second cast, repaired after being severely vandalized, is on the campus of Stanford University in California.

objects, in the Assisted Readymades (discussed in chapter 4), which became a precedent for Segal's life-sized white body-casts of people absorbed in daily activities. Segal's Stonewall sculpture made no reference to the riot, and he was unprepared for the outcry against the gay and lesbian couples he depicted as an expression of "the gentleness and humanity of homosexuals." "It shocks people to express the opinion that a homosexual is a decent, sensitive human being—and I'm shocked at that," Segal said. In fact, *Gay Liberation* was attacked from all sides. A spokesman for the Catholic Church condemned Segal's work on behalf of "the youngsters who will be lured into homosexuality" by the sculpture, while some gay and lesbian activists complained that the sculpture ignored the political event the site was famous for, instead honoring discreet couples or reducing "gay experience…to a pickup on a park bench."

Although highly publicized controversies over homoerotic imagery and AIDS later in the 1980s linked the art world with activist agendas associated with homosexuality, that dynamic was an exception to the rules by which twentieth-century art had developed. The response to Segal's *Gay Liberation* sculpture exemplifies the schism that divided the political from the artistic avant-garde at least since the Wilde trials of the 1890s. Activists complained that money raised for art could be better used for antihomophobic litigation: "We believe that legal and social equality for gay people is the only proper

Figure 6.3. John Button and Mario Dubsky, mural for Gay Activists Alliance (1971), destroyed when arson gutted the GAA headquarters in 1974. Photographs courtesy of the Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual, and Transgender Community Center National History Archives.

monument for the heroic Stonewall Rebellion," announced the Gay Activists Alliance. At the same time, the art press studiously ignored a controversy involving one of the best-known artists of the day. Looking back at the formative years for gay and lesbian political organizing and community building in the 1970s, what is striking is how invisible their image making was to the art world. A mural-scale collage installed in 1971 in the first headquarters of the Gay Activists Alliance in downtown Manhattan failed to arouse any coverage in art magazines despite the fact that it was an unmissable forty feet long in a public space at the heart of the art world and was created by an established painter, John Button (1929–82), collaborating with young British artist Mario Dubsky (1939–85), who was studying in New York on a prestigious fellowship (Figure 6.3).

Well into the 1980s, when arts professionals looked to popular visual culture, they ignored

Figure 6.4. Grafitti on "The Rocks," Lincoln Park, Chicago, mid-1990s. Photographs by Christopher Reed.

imagery associated with gay or lesbian identity. In 1988, a Museum of Modern Art exhibition on political posters included no examples of the AIDS-related broadsheets then covering the streets of Manhattan, nor have any recent books or exhibitions about graffiti and murals produced by racial- and ethnic-minority communities included the analogous gay imagery that emerged in the late 1970s to mark urban zones—the rocky revetment along Lake Michigan in Lincoln Park in Chicago or the abandoned warehouses on the piers off lower Manhattan, for example—where men were openly affectionate and sexual (Figures 6.4, 6.5). These sites of visual history were destroyed with no organized documentation when rising property values prompted local governments to reclaim these areas for more normative uses.

The sexually charged look of the Manhattan piers, however, attracted filmmakers and photographers, whose art offers a record of this environment infused with a subjectivity both fascinated and alienated. Arthur Tress (b. 1940) used the piers as a setting for images critical of an emerging gay culture, in his words, "founded upon the adoration of the phallus as a source of life and power" (Figure 6.6). The young artist David Wojnarowicz (1954–92) documented his own graffiti and murals on the piers and included these images in his photographs. "History is made and preserved by and for particular classes of people," he wrote; "A camera in some hands can preserve an alternative history." In his series *Arthur Rimbaud in New York* (the title asserts historical continuity with a heritage of sexual outsiders traced back through the nineteenth-century French poet), a figure wearing a

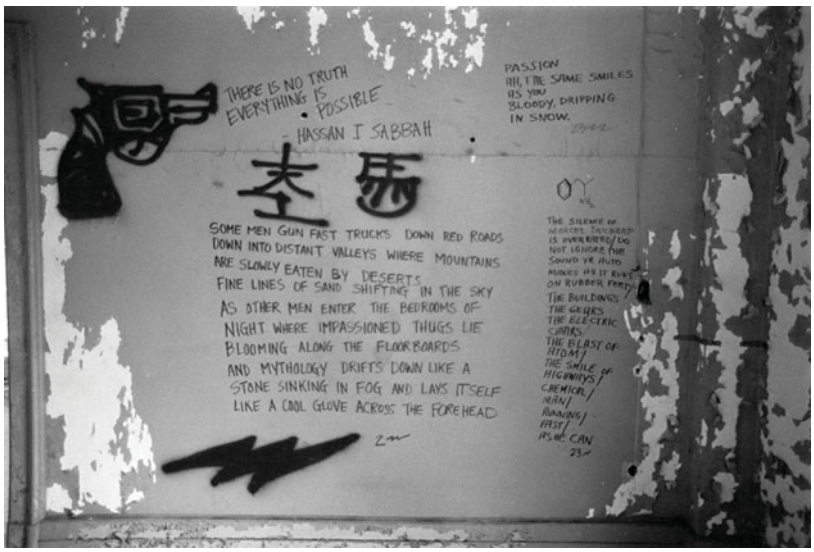


Figure 6.5. Leonard Fink, photographs of the West Side piers off lower Manhattan (1970s–80s). Photographs courtesy of the Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual, and Transgender Community Center National History Archive. The graffiti figures in the background of the third image were painted by an artist known as TAVA.

Figure 6.6. Arthur Tress, *Tava Pier Mural* (c. 1978), cibachrome print.

mask of Rimbaud's face poses in various sites around New York. In one room of an abandoned warehouse on the piers, which Wojnarowicz used as a studio, the Rimbaud figure stands before a framed drawing of a male nude and the graffitied statement "THE SILENCE OF MARCEL DUCHAMP IS OVERRATED" (Figure 6.7). This quotation from the conceptual artist Joseph Beuys claims an ambivalent avant-garde legacy for this site, linking it to the heritage of Rimbaud, Duchamp, and Beuys, but suggesting that the artistic stance of radical alienation offers little challenge to the economic forces poised to destroy this marginal environment when the rise in rents—due, ironically, largely to the nearby art galleries—made the property too valuable to leave to the disenfranchised.

FEMINISTS, LESBIANS, AND FEMALE SENSIBILITY

In the art world, some of the social changes associated with the 1960s began to register only in the 1970s, but those associated with homosexuality

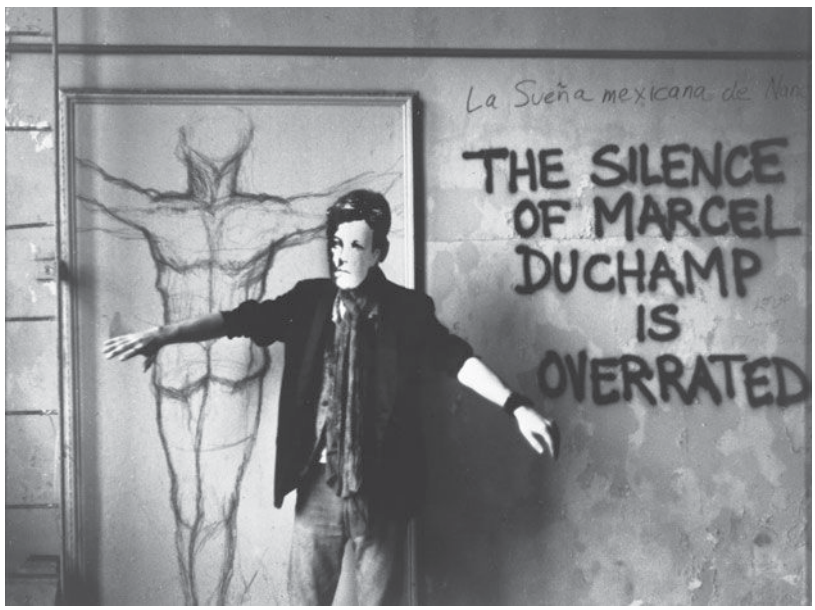


Figure 6.7. David Wojnarowicz, *Arthur Rimbaud in New York* (1978–79), from a series of 24 gelatin-silver prints. Courtesy of The Estate of David Wojnarowicz and P.P.O.W Gallery, New York, NY.

were not manifest until the 1980s. When these changes came, they were propelled in large measure by the energy of feminism. Feminism's potential to revolutionize the art world is implicit in the history of the relationship between art and sex described in the previous chapters. For over a century, aesthetic sensitivity was promoted as a feminine attribute, with the result that many women studied art, though few were accommodated in prestigious art careers. Women's substantial artistic expertise, however, fed feminist interest in art that challenged patriarchal standards, creating, by the early 1970s, a vibrant feminist art scene. Artist Deborah Kass (discussed in chapter 8), who began her career in New York in the mid-1970s, credits the feminism of this era with creating "the only truly grassroots art movement there's ever been in America." As the critic Lucy Lippard pointed out in her 1980 article "Sweeping Exchanges: The Contribution of Feminism to the Art of the 1970s," many of the definitive characteristics of postmodernism—from stylistic emphasis on "layering, fragmentation, and collage" to collaborative process, "autobiographical content," and attention to social issues—were first associated with feminist art. Although this matriarchal heritage for postmodernism is often overlooked in favor of a more prestigious intellectual legacy of American (men's) Pop art and European (men's) linguistic and social theory, feminists' rethinking of sex and gender was central to debates over sexual identity that roiled the art world throughout the last three decades of the twentieth century, overcoming the apolitical avant-gardism of the 1950s and '60s. From the mid-1980s onward, art became a—if not *the*—primary arena for debates over sexual identity, though hardly in the ways imagined by the sexologists who linked homosexuality with artistic sensitivity a century before.

Definitions of homosexuality are, as this book has shown, complex and controversial. The same is true of feminism, so it is no wonder that the relationship between homosexuality and feminism is hotly debated. Imputations of lesbianism were used throughout the twentieth century to discourage women from bonding together in social and political movements that challenged the authority of men. News coverage of growing feminist organizing around 1970 perpetuated this dynamic, focusing on Kate Millett (b. 1934), whose best-selling book *Sexual Politics* exposed the misogyny central to canonic modern literature. When the newsweekly *Time* ran a cover story on "The Politics of Sex" in 1970, it included a short article on Millett. Although she suggested for the cover of the magazine a picture of "not one woman but crowds of them" at a feminist rally, the magazine chose an intensely staring portrait it captioned as "Kate Millett of Women's Lib." Having used Millet to personify the resurgent feminist movement, *Time* emphasized her status as an artist: the magazine commissioned the cover portrait from painter Alice Neel (1900–1984), signaling Millett's place in the New York art world, and the article cited her sculpture, albeit rather dismissively, describing it as "bits of scrap representing soapbox-derby cars" and going into more detail

about her mother's objections to her hairstyle. In fact, Millett, a struggling, self-identified "downtown sculptor," barely knew Neel, an established portraitist, who painted the commissioned cover image from a photograph without Millett's knowledge. Millett recalls that she felt tricked by the magazine's anointing her as feminism's leader in its surprisingly upbeat—if superficial—coverage. This feeling intensified several weeks later when *Time* ran a vitriolic correction under the title "Women's Lib: A Second Look," which patched together quotations from critics (both male and female), beginning with an attack on *Sexual Politics* as "a farrago of blunders, distortions, vulgarities and plain nonsense" and ending with a warning that the "extreme" feminism of "sick and silly creatures" motivated by "splenetic frenzy of hatred for men" would become "an even more invidious cause of unhappiness" for women than patriarchy. The central revelation of this article was Millett's "confession" that, although she was married to the sculptor Fumiyo Yoshimura, "she is bisexual," which "is bound to discredit her as a spokeswoman for her cause." As Millett recalled, she had talked with friends frankly, "one gay to another," in front of *Time*'s reporters before the first article, and now identified herself as a lesbian specifically to counter the journalists' misrepresentation of her as a "nice married lady." The magazine, she concluded, used her to personify feminism, knowing they could then discredit her and other feminists using the medical language of sexology (*Time*'s identification of her as "bisexual" as opposed to her own more political claims to "gay" and "lesbian" identity).

What this episode reveals—in addition to the mainstream news media's role in circumscribing movements for social change—is the fraught relationship among the identities "feminist," "lesbian," and "artist." Journalists emphasized Millett's connections to the art world, already associated with sexual deviance, as they exploited divisions among feminists over issues of sexual identity. In an irony readers will recognize from earlier efforts to police homosexuality, this exercise of authoritative naming helped create what it aimed to suppress. As a result of increasing interest in art associated with feminism and sexual transgression, Neel received her first major museum exhibition in 1974, and her long-neglected nudes of pregnant women became better known than the portraits that had been the mainstay of her career. And although some feminists scrambled to deny any connection with lesbianism, for others the terms in the identity "lesbian-feminist" became inseparable. The phrase "feminism is the theory; lesbianism is the practice" was often used to sum up the ideology of this era—but with the circulation of competing definitions of both "feminism" and "lesbianism," this seemingly simple, and provocatively defiant, slogan could have very different meanings in practice.

One influential version of lesbian-feminist identity was articulated by the poet Adrienne Rich in a 1980 essay titled "Compulsory Heterosexuality and Lesbian Existence." Seeking alternatives to what she criticized as the

specifically masculine bias of medical ideas about sexuality that were based on what people do with their genitals, Rich proposed instead "to discover the erotic in female terms: that which is unconfined to any single part of the body or solely to the body itself." Rich identified a "lesbian continuum" that connects women's relationships to one another "from the infant suckling at her mother's breast, to the grown woman experiencing orgasmic sensations while suckling her own child, perhaps recalling her mother's milk smell in her own . . . to the woman dying at ninety, touched and handled by women." Rich's powerful argument named all women's nurturing relationships with other women as "lesbian," revaluing experiences and sensations long ignored or belittled by definitions of eroticism premised on men. Attacking conventional art and popular imagery for glamorizing heterosexuality and diminishing meaningful bonds among women, Rich, in a 1976 lecture, polemically asserted, "It is the lesbian in us who is creative, for the dutiful daughter of the fathers is only a hack." Rich's challenge to patriarchal convention made the identity "lesbian" central to both feminism and art.

Rich's insistence that bodily differences between men and women create essentially different sensations and attitudes is often termed "essentialist" feminism, although, because this term has been used pejoratively, its proponents prefer terms like "difference-based" or "separatist" to characterize how their version of feminism differs from those focused on claiming for women the values and privileges conventionally associated with men. Especially—though hardly exclusively—in California during the early 1970s, difference-based feminism inspired a great deal of innovative art by women challenging a wide range of art-world hierarchies. Working collaboratively, blending media and formats (such as sculpture and performance), invoking techniques and iconography associated with femininity, and often involving audiences actively in the experience of the art, these women's work generated widespread public interest.

Among the most influential examples of separatist feminist art was *Womanhouse*. A 1972 project by a women-only art school class under the direction of Judy Chicago (b. 1939) and Miriam Schapiro (b. 1923), *Womanhouse* turned the rooms of an abandoned mansion into environments addressing various aspects of women's lives. Because it was created by women, about women, and with an audience of women in mind, *Womanhouse* fulfills Rich's idea of "lesbian" identity in that it refuses to define what it means to be a woman in terms of men's needs or pleasures. The novelty of this approach attracted 10,000 visitors to *Womanhouse* during the month it was open, while uncounted others experienced it through news coverage and a documentary film. For all its potentially revolutionary potential, however, the extrapolation of lesbian identity to include all bonds among women risks de-sexing sexual identity (there is a parallel here with the expansion of a gay-identified "camp" aesthetic beyond the gay community, as discussed at the end of chapter 5). For

some self-identified lesbians, this broad definition overlooked or even demeaned the experiences and identities associated with sex between women. The *Womanhouse* collaborators devoted a full day's meeting to a "gay/straight dialog" over these issues, but they remained unresolved. Arlene Raven's retrospective commentary on *Womanhouse* ruefully notes that none of its five bedrooms was occupied, concluding, "The bedroom of sex and intimate secrets is probably the most tightly closed closet of all."

Judy Chicago's next—and most controversial—major project pushed arguments over the relationship between "lesbian" and "feminist" to the forefront of public debate. First exhibited in 1979, Chicago's *The Dinner Party*, a collaboration with over four hundred ceramists and needleworkers (mostly, but not exclusively, female), is an installation of thirty-nine place settings dedicated to historically significant women. Although the different plates refer to each woman specifically, Chicago's designs organized these symbolic elements into compositions that, especially in this feminist context, look like female sexual organs (Figure 6.8). Though some viewers welcomed this reference, *The Dinner Party* was condemned by conservative politicians as pornography and mocked by right-wing journalists and prominent art critics alike. A columnist in the *Washington Times* characterized *The Dinner Party* as a "a dyke's-eye view of some of the tough broads of the past," while in the *New York Review of Books*, John Richardson (whose adulatory biography of Picasso dwells admiringly over that artist's use of accordions to symbolize women's "squeeze box") invoked another famously aggressive male writer to opine that "Chicago's vulval artifacts bring to mind Kingsley Amis's hard lines on women's parts: 'like the inside of a giraffe's ear or a tropical fruit not much prized even by the locals.'" As debate intensified over the piece—which drew hundreds of thousands of viewers when exhibited over the next ten years in venues across six countries—so did Chicago's insistence that her visual reference was to butterflies, not vulvas. Her claims failed to placate critics while they disappointed feminists who admired Chicago's earlier works that, most clearly in her *Cunt Alphabet*, tried to imagine equivalents to the ubiquitous phallic symbolism of conventional art. These feminists were dismayed by Chicago's renunciation of the power of *The Dinner Party*, which, conceived on a monumental scale to propose a woman-centered symbolism drawing on traditions of ritual banquets, clearly proposed a heroic visual language for women. This is not to say that the abstract forms on the plates are images of vulvas (any more than such conventional phallic symbols as monumental obelisks are images of penises), but *The Dinner Party* succeeded in conferring on soft, flowing ripples formed from clay and cloth the authoritative status conventionally associated with hard, linear, thrusting monuments made of stone or metal. That the heterosexual artist behind this extraordinary project retreated in the face of attacks on her work as a lesbian was a profound disappointment to lesbian-feminists.

Figure 6.8. Judy Chicago, *The Dinner Party* (detail of the Georgia O'Keeffe place setting) (1979), Brooklyn Museum of Art. © 2010 Artists Rights Society (ARS), New York/ADAGP, Paris. Photo © Donald Woodman. The O'Keeffe place setting concludes the chronology of significant women proposed by layout of *The Dinner Party*, suggesting an historical continuum that unites feminism and art.

There is some irony in the similarity between radically misogynist attacks on Judy Chicago's project to celebrate women in women's terms as "a dyke's-eye view" and Adrienne Rich's radically feminist celebration of all women-centered experience as "lesbian." Irony is hard to appreciate for those caught in controversy, however, and the vitriolic responses to *The Dinner Party* help explain both Chicago's retreat from the sexual implications of her work and the very slow emergence of self-proclaimed lesbian imagery by other artists during the 1970s. When in 1977 the pioneering feminist journal *Heresies* called for submissions for a special issue on "Lesbian Art and Artists," no sexually explicit imagery was submitted. Outside of a few self-identified lesbian journals with very small circulations, which did experiment with sexual imagery of, by, and for women, it was difficult to conceive of visual expressions for lesbianism that would work for audiences accustomed to seeing female nudes or images of women in masculine dress (think of Brassaï's photographs) or even scenes of women having sex with one another (think of Courbet and Ingres) as affirmations of masculine heterosexuality.

Some lesbian artists took up secret codes, as men like Hartley and Hockney had done (as discussed in chapter 5). New York painter and poet Fran Winant (b. 1943) revived a language she had invented for childhood "journals and poems full of inexpressible loving though about persons of the 'wrong gender,'" now using it to surround an image of her much-loved dog in reference to the legacy of the French animal painter Rosa Bonheur (discussed in chapter 3) (Figure 6.9). About this series of paintings, Winant says: "Inevitably, my relationship to other women and my 'own secret' position in society were played out in my images of my

Figure 6.9. Fran Winant, *Dog with Secret Language* (1975), acrylic on canvas. Photograph by D. James Dee courtesy of the artist.

dog, but this work was not intended to be a stand-in for experiences I was afraid to describe—rather my lesbian sensibility illuminated itself . . . through the work."

Winant saw her art as directly inspired by her experience in New York's energetic lesbian-feminist community. "I'm a lesbian artist because my community gives me the strength to be an artist," she asserted in *Heresies* in 1977; twenty years later she recalled, "the lesbian feminist movement's revolutionary moment seemed so naturally to carry me along while it lasted and, even afterward, continued to sustain me from within." But many, even in this community, disagreed: Winant's earlier statement about being a "lesbian artist," made in a roundtable discussion with her colleagues, was followed by shouts of "No!" from the others. Manifestos by painters Louise Fishman (b. 1939) and Dona Nelson (b. 1947) in the *Heresies* "Lesbian Art and Artists" issue contrasted the politics of lesbian community building with their individual intuitive processes of painting. Fishman warned "against the dangers of purposefully and consciously setting out to make lesbian or feminist imagery or any other imagery," and her illustrated painting was abstract. Some of Fishman's other paintings, however, incorporated words like "Angry," and in retrospect she described her art in the 1970s as motivated by trying "to address an audience of women."

Other artists, such as Harmony Hammond (b. 1944), developed abstract vocabularies to evoke lesbian-feminist ideas. Hammond's sculptures drew on craft techniques long associated with women—quilting, weaving, basket-making, and ceramics—to invite a tactile, sensual response that affirms associations of women's bodies with soft curves and strong cores (Figure 6.10). In 1973, Hammond asserted: "To give form to my female feelings, to give form to myself, it seems necessary to work with woman's materials—cloth, thread, hair, etc.—trying to

Figure 6.10. Harmony Hammond, *Sneak* (1977–79), (destroyed), cloth, wood, acrylic, foam rubber, gesso, rhoplex, in thirteen sections. Courtesy Dwight Hackett projects. Art © Harmony Hammond/ Licensed by VAGA, New York, NY. Photo credit: Harmony Hammond. Hammond describes these "female arch forms" created by fabric over muscle-like foam supported by a wooden skeleton as "stand-ins for the female body . . . an ever multiplying army of black, white, and gray female forms insidiously banding together and moving forward." *Sneak* was among Hammond's first consciously lesbian works. In an early installation at PS1 in New York, the forms marched out of a closet in the gallery.

combine a sort of figurative representation with abstraction." More recently, she explained, "the wrapped sculptures were soft but SOLID with lumps and bumps and markings like our bodies—or at least my body—they could hold themselves up and were made out of themselves, wrapped from the inside out" in a way that reflected the feminist dictum "the personal is political" because of how they "reach from the center out. When I used the word 'figurative' in 1973, what I and the other feminist artists working with materials and process were really talking about was the gendered BODY—the body as a social, political, and cultural site. . . . I wasn't interested in figuration per se."

By 1977, as a cofounder of the editorial collective that produced *Heresies*, Hammond voiced frustration at the absence of a "conscious political" context that would allow her art to signify as she intended. Determined to create "lesbian art contexts" to counter "the heterosexualization and erasure of works by lesbian artists in both mainstream and feminist art communities," Hammond in 1978 curated "A Lesbian Show" in an alternative exhibition space in Manhattan. Like other "alternative" exhibitions—the implied comparison is with commercial galleries—this show included readings, performances, and discussions on themes related to the exhibition; there was also a slide presentation about crimes against women and a video documentary of a women's music festival.

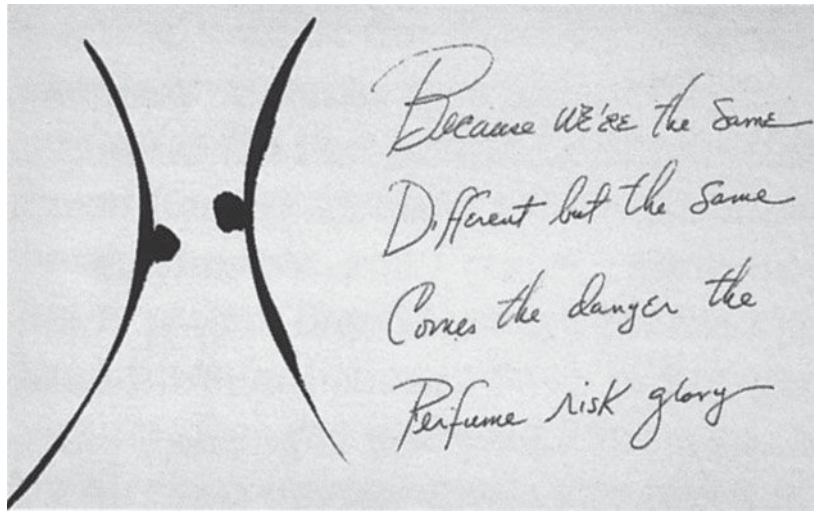


Figure 6.11. Kate Millett, drawing from the series *The Lesbian Body* (1977). The title of this series is an homage to Monique Wittig's book-length poem *Le Corps lesbien*, which appeared in an English translation in 1975.

Hammond recalled that one lesbian represented by a prominent gallery was warned that, "if she exhibited 'as a lesbian,' she could say good-bye to the gallery exhibition and representation of her work. (She didn't show)." But many of the artists featured in the *Heresies* special issue did exhibit. "Although the lesbian body was referenced in many of the pieces, nearly all the work . . . was abstract," Hammond recalls. Kate Millett was represented, not by her recent sculpture (complex tableaus of imprisoned manikins that addressed issues of incarceration and violence), but by calligraphic drawings with poetic texts that evoked erotic touch (Figure 6.11). The new visibility of lesbian artists was significant, Hammond concluded, not for revealing an overlooked but extant "lesbian sensibility," but for opening the question of what lesbian art might be at a time when lesbians were struggling to define—rather than be defined by—this identity.

An even greater diversity of expression was revealed in 1980 when a six-woman collective at the Woman's Building, a feminist institution in Los Angeles, staged "The Great American Lesbian Art Show" and encouraged others to arrange related concurrent exhibitions at over two hundred other venues across the United States. Although this large, loosely linked enterprise was poorly documented, commentators at the time and since have noted a greater interest in figuration among lesbian artists outside New York. Some attributed West Coast artists' use of sexual imagery to their more separatist ideologies, proudly indifferent to whatever interpretations critics might derive. Terry Wolverton, an organizer of the Los Angeles show, described the West Coast artists' imagery as an attempt "to remythologize lesbianism, to redeem it from the images of depravity and evil that were common in both pornographic depiction and religious interpretation, to make it 'good.'" Wolverton cited, in particular, "the bread dough sculptures of Nancy Fried (such a homey, nonthreatening medium!), capturing scenes of domestic life—two

Figure 6.12. Nancy Fried, *TV and Chinese Take Out* (1979), dough and acrylic. Photograph courtesy of the artist. Commissioned by a couple, this tiny (5 x 5 in.) plaque celebrates an image of lesbian bliss with an aesthetic that flouts masculine imperatives to monumental scale and conventional art media.

women in the bath, one nude woman giving another a foot massage—and painted with the exquisite detail of a Fabergé egg" (Figure 6.12).

As fabric, calligraphy, and dough competed with painting in the first lesbian art exhibitions, it became clear that many lesbian artists connected challenges to conventional sexual imagery with challenges to the conventional hierarchies of fine art. Such challenges were also reflected in the widespread turn to photography among lesbian artists. Explaining her attraction to photography, Tee Corinne (1943–2006) said, "It wasn't really an art! It wasn't part of [my] fine art training. . . . I wanted to do something where content and politics could be satisfied." From casual snapshots to complex documentary projects, huge numbers of photographs record these years of purposeful lesbian community building. Exemplary of the photographers who made themselves the visual record keepers for the nascent lesbian-feminist community was the Washington, D.C.–based Joan E. Biren, known as JEB (b. 1944). JEB made this community both her subject and her audience, presenting her work in calendars and books sold at feminist bookstores and as fundraising slide shows for lesbian (and gay) causes. Her images stress the diversity among lesbian-feminists, including a range of ages, races, and modes of self-presentation among individuals, couples, triples, families with children, and both masculine- and feminine-looking women (Figures 6.13, 6.14). Reflecting the lesbian-feminist community back to itself, her photographs celebrated the camaraderie, bravery, and imagination of women working to live out its ideals.

Figure 6.13. JEB (Joan E. Biren), *Lori and Valerie. Washington, D.C. 1978*. In JEB's book *Eye to Eye*, this image appeared with a quotation from Valerie Mullin, who is depicted: "There is all this intimidating stuff around cars, because cars represent the power of being able to cope, to get around in the world. If you know how to do that, you begin to realize how much more you can do. You can do anything you want."

Figure 6.14. JEB (Joan E. Biren), *Mara. Broome's Island, Maryland. 1976*. JEB published this image with a quotation from Helen Diner's *Mothers and Amazons* exemplary of essentialist feminism: "A matriarchal realm hardly knows such a thing as a war of conquest, although the defense of the domestic egg is stalwart and brave."

Looking back on this period, however, commentators have noted the frequent evasion of eroticism even in photographs by and of self-identified lesbians. JEB's single female nudes, for instance, follow conventions of art photography in that they seem unaware of the viewer's desire; when naked women are pictured together they are involved in physical labor. Such reticence never characterized Corinne's art. Corinne produced portraits and documentary photographs of her lesbian community, but, as the titles of some of her books—*Yantras of Womanlove* (1982) and *Dreams of the Woman Who Loved Sex* (1987)—make clear, her work did not shy away from eroticism. Corinne's diverse series of imagery resist associations of photography and lesbian sex with prurient voyeurism, however. Innovative compositions using reflection and collage infuse Corinne's sexual images with a sense of humor and delight in women's bodies quite different from conventions of lesbian imagery developed by men. Corinne's frequent use of the photographic technique of solarization both shields her models from a too-intrusive gaze and creates, in Wolverton's words, "a rosy glow, almost a halo, around [her] subjects that confers a benediction on their acts" (Figure 6.15).

All of the artists discussed in this section continued to produce imaginative, passionately

felt work long after the 1970s. For these women, the end of the seventies was not the end of feminism, despite announcements to that effect by high-profile politicians, academics, and pundits. Hammond and Corinne, through their publications and organizing on behalf of lesbian (and sometimes gay) artists, helped develop and sustain contexts in which their visual expressions of lesbian-feminist ideals can be understood and appreciated. This accomplishment does not, of course, prevent other—sometimes hostile—interpretations of their work. A quarter century after Corinne's 1975 *Cunt Coloring Book* was published, an antigay political group distributed copies of it to U.S. senators as an example of pornography, with a spokeswoman condemning it as "truly disgusting." True to her woman-centered ideology, Corinne's response bypassed the mainly male senators to focus on the spokeswoman: "I . . . wondered if Ms. Sheldon thinks she doesn't have genitals or thinks that her own are 'truly disgusting.'" Describing her initial motivation for creating the book, she recalled, "I was indifferent to what men thought of it. . . . It was women I imagined, coloring with pleasure."

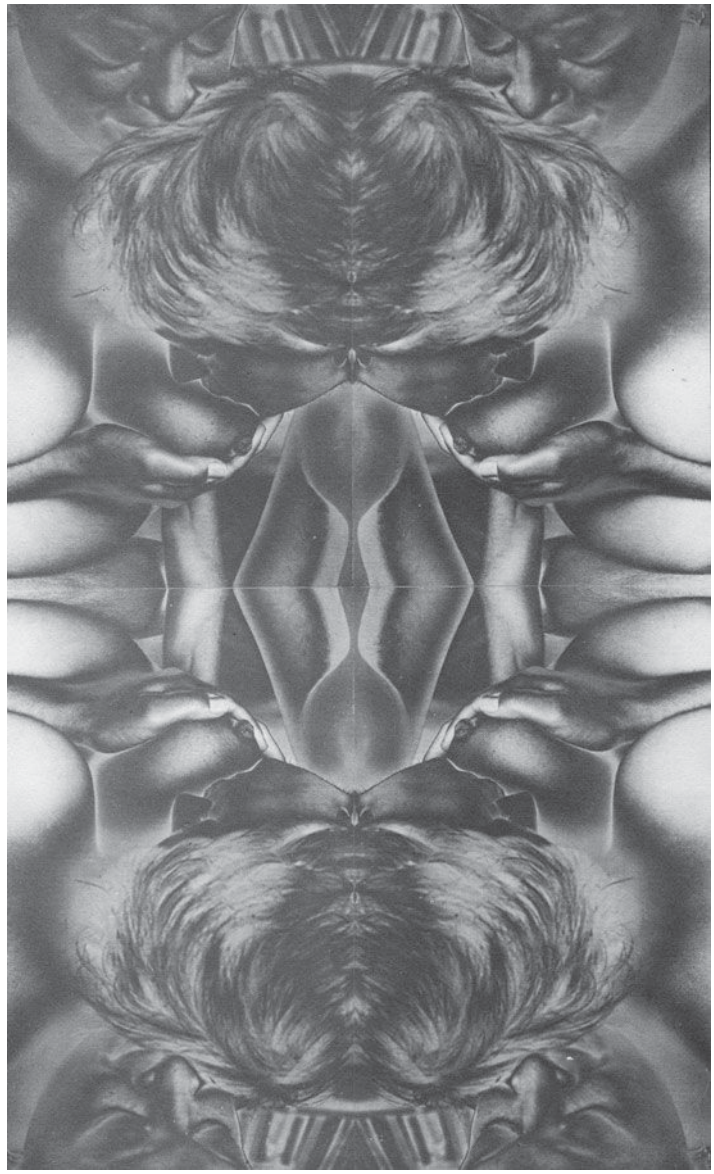


Figure 6.15. Tee Corinne, *Yantras of Womenlove # 43* (1982). Tee A. Corinne Papers, Coll. 263, Special Collections and University Archives, University of Oregon Libraries.

IDENTITY AND SENSIBILITY

The separatist lesbian-feminist activism of the 1970s can be understood as an outcome of the medical theories of sexual identity developed a century earlier, although neither the lesbians nor the scientists would likely welcome this analysis. Nevertheless, one logical implication of sexology's identification of homosexuality as the root of so many other personality traits would be the banding together of communities based

on sexual identity. Even without accepting medical claims that homosexuality is biologically marked, it is reasonable to imagine that people who share experiences of sexual desire and social opprobrium might develop common patterns of thought and feeling. A corollary of such theories would suggest that homosexuals might manifest distinct sensibilities that would be visible in their art. Assertions about the national characteristics of art have been common for as long as there have been nations, and gender-based versions of this idea also have a long history, overwhelmingly proposed by men to assert the superiority of male artists. During the 1970s a number of female artists and critics—Judy Chicago and Lucy Lippard prominent among them—reversed this argument, celebrating what they claimed was a female propensity for rounded forms, interior spaces, tactility, and detail.

Sexual identity came late to this discourse, but by the end of the 1970s, social and political campaigns to strengthen gay and lesbian communities challenged the pathologization of homosexuality by celebrating gay and lesbian identities as alternative ways of perceiving, knowing, and feeling, often associating these with the history of witchcraft and other forms of pagan spirituality. For lesbians, Monique Wittig's influential writings asserted lesbian identity as an alternative to the identity "woman"—a term defined by its subordination to "man" both grammatically and conceptually—and thus the potential basis of completely new ways of thinking and feeling that posed a radical alternative to what she called "the straight mind." These trends offer a context for understanding the 1982 exhibition *Extended Sensibilities* at the New Museum in New York. This was the first museum show to focus on the idea of sexual identity, and the first to integrate art by gay men with work by Harmony Hammond, Nancy Fried, and others who had exhibited under the rubric "lesbian" during the 1970s. This exhibition and the debates it aroused offer a case study in the relationship between art and sexual identity in the early 1980s.

Dan Cameron, who curated *Extended Sensibilities*, explained in the catalog that his exhibition was not about "gay art," a term that during the 1970s was used to describe figurative paintings that blended academic skills in rendering the nude with an iconography similar to that of the physique magazines. A few New York art galleries specialized in artists like Delmas Howe (b. 1935), a native New Mexican who recast Greco-Roman myth with cowboys (Figure 6.16). For the most part, Cameron noted, this art circulated within the gay community, "being seemingly determined *not* to appeal to the rest of society." Where Cameron presents this as a problem with the art, it might also be analyzed as a dynamic of reception. On the rare occasions when mainstream art magazines noticed Howe's paintings, they were praised as satires on neoclassical art or popular paintings of the American West, "at one and the same time frankly trashy and yet in its own way extraordinary [*sic*] powerful, as hard-hitting in terms of our own decade as Warhol's 'Marilyns' were for those of the 60s." The artist,

however, described his work as straightforwardly erotic: "The only nude imagery I saw as a boy was the Greek and Roman art reproduced in our encyclopedia. And I was raised sitting on the laps of real cowboys. My little boy mind put the two together and that eroticism remains with me today." Imputing satire to Howe's paintings, critics treated his frank and affirmative expressions of sexual identity as another category of "primitive" or "outsider" art, for which the artists' intentions are irrelevant to how the art world values the work.

Figure 6.16. Delmas Howe, *The Three Graces* (1972–73), oil on canvas. Courtesy of RioBravoFineArt, Inc. Truth or Consequences, NM. Titled to allude to classical images of three beautiful female nudes, this painting filled the cover of *Art and Artists* magazine in December 1979.

Cameron passed over what he called the "Ghetto Content" of art like Howe's in favor of what he called "sensibility content." This he defined as derived "from personal experience of homosexuality" by the artist, though it "need not have anything to do with sexuality or even lifestyle. It presupposes a network of ideas and feelings which represent gay expression in symbolic or allegorical ways." It attempts to "speak gay thoughts which are also about other things as well." Phrases this vague function more as aspirations than definitions, and it proved easy to second-guess Cameron's distinctions, especially given his acknowledgment that the *Extended Sensibilities* show was inspired by artist Arch Connelly's (1950–93) suggestion of "the connection between gay sensibility and mannerist art." The term *mannerism* refers to the exaggerated personal styles developed by artists just after the Renaissance, and could easily be applied to Howe's paintings. Cameron's curatorial vision, however, was motivated less by the look of art than by the social structures that conditioned its perception. Frustrated by the art world's marginalization of homoerotic imagery, Cameron wanted to explore artistic manifestations of sexual identity that went beyond subject matter and—importantly—challenged the avant-garde's skittishness about homosexual identity. Cameron was not alone in this aspiration. In 1980, the critic John Perreault, citing the precedent of the lesbian art shows emerging from "feminist and feminist-inspired support systems," had challenged gay men to contest the homophobia that kept gay art "a secret" and foreclosed debate over "whether there is such a thing as a gay sensibility."

Associations between homosexuality and art were strongly resisted by the art world, however. The homophobic rhetorics of old-guard critics like Hilton Kramer persisted in the writings of rising young tastemakers like Thomas Lawson, whose influential 1981 manifesto "Last Exit Painting" objected to art with "gay subject matter," "camp" sensibility, or a "strain of Warholism," all of which he complained "debased" modernism and reflected "only the ambition of the artist to be noticed" (in contrast, Lawson praised David Salle's "seductive and obscure" paintings, with their quotations from heterosexual pornography of "naked women, presented as objects"). Cameron recalled that "nearly every out or closeted gay art world professional . . . assured me that it would be difficult, verging on impossible, to get a serious art world gig after doing this project."

The primary accomplishment of *Extended Sensibilities*, therefore, was simply to gather a group of artists willing to identify publicly as gay. The risks associated with "coming out" were reflected in the fact that most of the male artists in the show were young and relatively unknown, without lucrative reputations to lose. The women in the show had already exhibited as lesbians and were part of a vibrant lesbian community accustomed to being ignored by the art world. Harmony Hammond says of this moment, "Lesbians had nothing to lose and everything to gain from being in Dan's show." Nancy Fried recalls that when she got the phone call asking her to participate in the show, "I remember walking outside and jumping up in the air and screaming, 'I did it!' It was so exciting. It was in a real museum!" Fran Winant was struck, listening to gay critics complain about the show years later, at the contrast between her "feeling of a new world being born that I experienced as an artist whose work was in the show" and their disappointment "because 'the big names who should have been represented' refused to come out." Among the men in the show, the best known limited their exposure. Scott Burton (1939–89), insisting that his well-received anthropomorphic sculpture was unrelated to gay sensibility, presented video documentation of his performance art. The British duo Gilbert and George (b. 1943 and 1942, respectively), whose status as a couple had never been publicly discussed, tried to withdraw from the exhibition after the catalog had gone to press because, according to Cameron, they "simply hated the idea of being shown in a gay context." A collector lent their work at the last minute, however.

For the gay press, Cameron's concern with questions of style was not gay enough. James Saslow, writing in *The Advocate,* complained that the show was "short on images that deal directly with two staples of gay subject matter: sex and politics. . . . What matters to the New Museum is not gay people themselves but High Art, and whatever notice this exhibit takes of us is on its terms not ours." But the art journals were not appeased. Critical reaction to *Extended Sensibilities* exemplified art-world anxiety over any association of homosexuality with art. In *Artforum*,

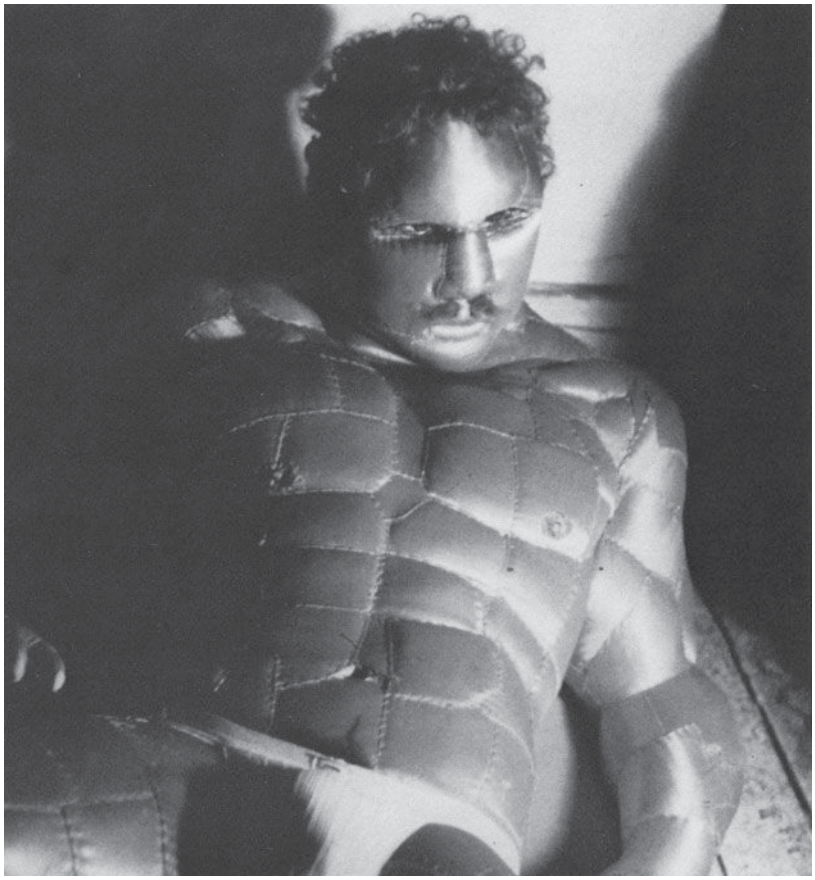


Figure 6.17. John Henninger, *Lying Man* (1980), stuffed satin. Exhibited in *Extended Sensibilities*.

Richard Flood invoked outdated Freudian notions of homosexuality as a form of narcissistic immaturity to complain that the artists "represented sensibilities more stunted than extended" and their work "just barely, if at all, staggers past obsession to nearsighted reflection." Stressing his antipathy to the legacy of Oscar Wilde, Flood pronounced "particularly unpleasant" the photo-montages of Gilbert and George, with their "Wildean penchant for trafficking working class lads," and objected to the "overt sexual objectification" of John Henninger's (b. 1942) life-sized satin dolls in poses from gay sex clubs (Figure 6.17).

Henninger's dolls and Gilbert and George's *Four Feelings* were among the few pieces in *Extended Sensibilities* to depict the nude body in erotic poses. In both cases, this imagery was mediated by a sensibility attuned to artifice. Henninger's choice of quilted satin as a material evokes the fussy interior design associated with camp. The title of Gilbert and George's *Four Feelings*, with its emphasis on emotional perception, complemented the exhibition's focus on sensibility. The suggestion of an emotional equivalence among the four photographs juxtaposed in their work—a black-and-white male nude, a garish green image of themselves performing as "living sculptures" in their trademark matching suits, and

two leafy natural forms, one red and one yellow—echoed the attribution of human feelings to inanimate objects in Aesthetic poetry. Echoing the Aesthetes' tendency to deny identification with the sexual transgressions they described (as discussed in chapter 4), Gilbert and George's efforts to disassociate from explicit articulations of minority sexual identity can be seen as another element in their perpetuation of an Aesthetic legacy (they also declined to authorize reproduction of their work in this book).

Figure 6.18. Arch Connelly, *Raja* (1982), mixed media, Bodi Lucas collection. This piece is closely related to the work Connolly exhibited in *Extended Sensibilities*.

Much of the art in *Extended Sensibilities* evoked this Aestheticism-to-camp trajectory to propose sensibilities associated with homosexual identity though not explicitly erotic. Arch Connelly's assemblages of mass-produced decorative items, from bright plastic aquarium furniture and costume jewelry to marble-patterned countertops, and Jerry Janosco's (b. 1947) combinations of kitschy ceramic casts of neoclassical sculptures both revealed elements of campy artificiality lurking within consumer culture (Figures 6.18, 6.19). Conversely, Charley Brown's (b. 1945) gaudy portraits of a drag queen named Bi (pronounced "Bee") turned out, on close inspection, to be constructed from such homey materials as pins, toothpicks, and felt (Figure 6.20). This look reflected the artist's self-imposed rules for "Bi": that her images be made all in one session and completely from found materials, a process he compared to "getting into drag myself." "Putting it all together and then putting it on was the fun part of doing drag; wearing it is…just work," he explains, characterizing the Bi pictures as "total fun! Total trash! Total camp!" Although camp extravagance is often associated with gay—not lesbian—identity, Nancy Fried's tiny, bejeweled harem rooms seemed also to indulge in fantasies of camp extravagance (Figure 6.21).

A taste for camp—what might be described as the art of artifice—was also clear in the part of the catalog Cameron called the "scrapbook," for which each artist selected one image that was "important from both a personal and artistic point of view" (Figure 6.22). The result is a visual lexicon of images that look gay—or, more precisely, reward ways of seeing associated with the visual history of gay identity. Both Connelly and Brown chose photographs evocative of George Platt Lynes's midcentury fashion advertisements. (Brown's was an earlier collaboration posed by Bi.) Henninger selected a Cecil-Beatonesque photograph of Queen Marie of Romania. Fried's inclusion of a lacy valentine from the 1940s manifests a campy love for what aesthetic authorities would

Figure 6.20. Charley Brown, *Bi Felt Like Screaming* (1979), acrylic, pins, and felt on cardboard. Exhibited in *Extended Sensibilities.*

Figure 6.19. Jerry Janosco, *Innocence* (1981), ceramic. Photo credit: Robin Holland. Exhibited in *Extended Sensibilities*.

dismiss as vulgar and overwrought. More provocatively, Janosco chose a recent U.S. Army recruiting ad that echoes the juxtapositions of ceramic masks of Michelangelo's *David* in his own sculpture, implying suppressed gay meanings behind masculine guises usually perceived as natural or authentic. Taken together, the scrapbook images demonstrated camp's delight in revealing the artificiality that the dominant culture sees as normal.

Speaking in public forums organized to accompany the *Extended Sensibilities* show, gay and lesbian authors, though they did not always use the term *camp,* consistently invoked camp's characteristics in analyzing sensibilities they associated with homosexuals. The novelist Edmund White proposed "ornamentation, the oblique angle of vision, fantasy and theatricality, and . . . an identification with the underdog" as the "social consequences of coming out." Bertha Harris, novelist and coauthor of the pioneering *Joy of Lesbian Sex* (1978), cited the precedent of fin-de-siècle dandies to contrast "the heterosexual appetite for usefulness" with a propensity to "fabricate uselessness" that, she predicted, "will come to seem aesthetically essential to the world at large."

The art world rejected such claims for subcultural identity, however, dismissing camp as a viable aesthetic and insisting on artistic individualism. Reviewing *Extended Sensibilities* in *Arts* magazine, the self-identified gay artist Nicolas Moufarrege (1947–85) asserted, "We are faced with artists who happen to be homosexual rather than a particular homosexual

Figure 6.21. Nancy Fried, *The Pool* (1981), clay and acrylic. Exhibited in *Extended Sensibilities*.

aesthetic." Recognizing that "the camp sensibility prevailing" among the artists in *Extended Sensibilities* was "due to their homosexuality," Moufarrege, nevertheless, insisted, "one cannot speak of a homosexual aesthetic," and "it would be frightening to see the work of these artists, and others, stereotyped as homosexual, for they are artists 'before' they are homosexual." The well-known gay graffiti artist Keith Haring (1958–90) was not included in *Extended Sensibilities* (Cameron recalls that "Keith was everywhere" at the time and he wanted to "use the space to expose completely new artists"), and Moufarrege cited Haring approvingly as an artist who "accepts his homosexuality but does not see it as his only artistic concern." Moufarrege's phrasing reflects the power of the myth of artistic individualism, which grounds avant-garde prestige in ideals of self-expression. Though in theory individualism is given free rein in the avant-garde, in practice it is defined by rejecting associations with subordinate groups (thus artists can express their Americanness and still be individuals, but to identify as a feminist or a homosexual is assessed as a limitation). Artistic individualism by default, therefore, reflects dominant cultural values, which avant-garde artists are rewarded for enacting in increasingly extreme ways (male artists are encouraged to be great womanizers, for instance; female artists are encouraged to perform heterosexual availability). The emergence of gay and lesbian identity as self-conscious political collectivities during the 1970s and '80s created a situation in which long-standing associations of artistry with homosexuality became a potent threat to avant-garde individualism. The supposedly freewheeling art world, therefore, strenuously resisted—and often still resists—acknowledging sexual identity as a meaningful constituent of art production and criticism.

Figure 6.22. Scrapbook images from the *Extended Sensibilities* catalog. Clockwise from the top: Charley Brown's image *Bi in Blackgama Ad*, a spoof on celebrity ads for a fur company, was made to publicize Bi's 1977 performance in "The Valerie Solanas Story" about the attempted assassination of Andy Warhol; Nancy Fried sent the mid-twentieth-century valentine; John Henninger's image is a 1905 photograph of Queen Marie of Romania; Arch Connelly's image is from a 1966 issue of *Harper's Bazaar*; Fran Winant contributed the 1895 photograph of "Calamity Jane." In the center, Jerry Janosco's image is an army recruiting ad from around 1980.

Had this debate been allowed to evolve, such simplistic choices between individual and collective identity might have expanded into freer explorations of the legacies of Aestheticism and camp as sensibilities that might be treasured by those who identify as gay and appreciated by those who value visual and sexual diversity. Though intended to initiate a process of inquiry, however, *Extended Sensibilities* in retrospect stands out as an isolated episode. No similar exhibition of art by gay men or lesbians was attempted during the 1980s, and questions of "sensibilities" associated with sexual identity vanished from critical writing. Links

between art and homosexuality did not disappear, however. Quite the contrary. Events unforeseen in 1982 marked the 1980s as a time of extraordinary convergence of art and sexual identity—not over questions of sensibility emerging from the history of modern aesthetics, but over political activism forged in the crucible of crisis.

CHAPTER 7

THE AIDS DECADE, 1982–92

IN 1981 THE first news reports appeared about hitherto rare diseases striking small clusters of gay men who were found to have severely compromised immune systems. Initially called GRID (Gay Related Immune Deficiency), the syndrome was recognized in other populations, and the name changed to AIDS (Acquired Immunodeficiency Syndrome). In Europe and North America, however, it remained closely associated with homosexuality. Gay men seemed to comprise the majority of sufferers, although lower levels of access to medical care for other significantly infected populations—Africans and intravenous drug users, in particular—made it impossible to chart AIDS's spread exactly. What was certain was that AIDS was spreading quickly among gay men. And it was terrifying. As a previously unknown condition that could remain asymptomatic for months or years, AIDS infected significant numbers of people before it was identified. Until the development of blood tests in 1985, people could be unknowingly infected until the onset of often debilitating or fatal diseases registered the collapse of their immune system. Furthermore, AIDS's modes of transmission remained initially uncertain, sparking a panic that lasted long after scientists dismissed the possibility of contamination from coughs or similar casual contact (debates over the dangers of various more intimate forms of contact, such as kissing, persisted for years). The horror attending this combination of confusion, illness, and death was compounded by a sense of abandonment when it became clear that, as long as AIDS remained confined to populations marginalized by homosexuality (and, later, nationality or

race), most medical and governmental institutions remained unconcerned. The mainstream press treated a plague among gay men with indifference to all but the question of risk to "normal" people, while right-wing politicians seized on AIDS as evidence of divine punishment for deviating from the heterosexual norm.

AIDS AND THE AVANT-GARDE

As the previous chapters have described, the avant-gardes of major North American and European cities overlapped substantially—if not always openly—with urban gay communities, which now found themselves literally struggling for their lives. By 1992, ten years after the *Extended Sensibilities* show, 50,000 AIDS cases had been reported in the United States alone, and AIDS had become the leading cause of death for Americans aged 25–44. By 1995, a quarter of the men who exhibited in *Extended Sensibilities* had died, as had Haring and Moufarrege, the artists who (in the review quoted at the conclusion of the previous chapter) exemplified alternatives to that exhibition's interest in the relationship between art and homosexuality. Such statistics only start to suggest the climate of crisis that overwhelmed debates over sexual identity and sensibility. By 1992 it was estimated that "500 professional artists in the United States put AIDS at the center of their work," and the effects of AIDS became, arguably, *the* dominant issue in avant-garde art. AIDS, thus, dramatically altered how art, homosexuality, and the relationship between them were understood. Feminists have noted—rightly—that the avant-garde's turn toward "postmodern" engagement in political and social issues during the last two decades of the twentieth century borrowed substantially from the strategies and concerns of feminist art. But the daring ideas and powerful effects of feminist visual culture during the 1970s were sited primarily among people and organizations outside the avant-garde. When AIDS threw the avant-garde into crisis, the activist strategies associated with feminist art were seized upon by artists, art critics, and art institutions. Suggestions of a homosexual "sensibility" attuned to Aesthetic sensitivity, camp whimsy, or subtle codes were supplanted by images of homosexuals as forceful political advocates using collectively produced and mass-distributed imagery to advocate on their own behalf.

Art critics analyzing the ways AIDS made homosexuality suddenly visible reflected this shift away from the avant-garde's usual fixation on individual aesthetic sensibility to a new engagement with the social consequences of mass-mediated visual culture. When the AIDS virus caused sickness and death among tens of thousands of people, it revealed gay men in all walks of life, including celebrities already in the public eye. Especially early in the epidemic, mainstream news coverage of celebrity AIDS cases focused not on having the disease but on how to spot it in

others, often conflating signs of AIDS with signs of homosexuality. In the paradigmatic case of movie star Rock Hudson, who died in 1985, journalists combed through decades of photographs for clues that were now seen to reveal the twinned secrets of his homosexuality and the onset of AIDS-related diseases. Art historian Simon Watney introduced his pioneering analysis of representations of AIDS in newspapers and on television with the bitter observation, "The British media cares as much about our health as *Der Sturm* cared about that of the Jews in the 1930s."

Such critiques of mainstream news imagery prompted similar critiques of established artists and art institutions. Activists condemned documentary photographers whose work seemed to replicate journalistic clichés of AIDS patients as freaks dying pathetically alone. At a 1988 MoMA exhibition of Nicholas Nixon's (b. 1947) photographs of people with AIDS, activists from the group ACT UP (AIDS Coalition to Unleash Power) sat in the gallery with photographs of energetic people captioned as "living with"—not dying of—AIDS. The activists talked to viewers about their criticism of the art on display and handed out fliers that concluded with the demand "STOP LOOKING AT US; START LISTENING TO US" (Text 7.1).

This demonstration challenged not only the decorum of one of New York's most prestigious museums but modernism's emphasis on artistic self-expression and individual aesthetic appreciation. The values of modernist aesthetics, as Jan Zita Grover noted, replicated mainstream news coverage in privileging the perspective of image makers and viewers over the experiences of the people depicted. Applied to AIDS portraiture, this dynamic promoted passivity, because it framed people with AIDS as docile victims, their ravaged faces and bodies arranged as spectacle to elicit sensations of pity or horror in viewers, rather than challenging them with new knowledge about the medical and social implications of the epidemic. Watney, criticizing photographers who "ruthlessly selected subjects suffering from extreme physical debilitation, or visible cancers and tumors," accused these artists of "reinforcing the ill-informed belief that people with HIV can somehow be easily identified and 'detected'" and ignoring the "collective achievements of people living with AIDS, who have established an extensive and unprecedented network of international organisations providing information and support." Art critic and AIDS activist Douglas Crimp complained, "Clearly the problem with these photographs is that the stake is to make beautiful photographs. The stake is not to contest the standard representation of AIDS."

For an art critic to elevate social criteria above claims to beauty marks a significant shift away from modernist conventions concerning art's definition and purpose. Challenging MoMA's decision to organize its AIDS-related exhibition around a single documentary photographer, Crimp, already a well-known proponent of postmodernist photography,

TEXT FROM A FLYER HANDED BY ACT UP VOLUNTEERS TO VISITORS AT THE 1988 MUSEUM OF MODERN ART RETROSPECTIVE EXHIBITION OF NICHOLAS NIXON'S PHOTOGRAPHY, WHICH INCLUDED A SECTION TITLED "PEOPLE WITH AIDS: EXCERPT FROM WORK IN PROGRESS"

NO MORE PICTURES WITHOUT CONTEXT

We believe that the representation of people with AIDS (PWAs) affects not only how viewers will perceive PWAs outside the museum but, ultimately, crucial issues of AIDS funding, legislation, and education.

The artist's choice to produce representational work always affects more than a single artist's career, going beyond issues of curatorship, beyond the walls on which an artist's work is displayed.

Ultimately, representations affect those portrayed.

In portraying PWAs as people to be pitied or feared, as people alone and lonely, we believe that this show perpetuates general misconceptions about AIDS without addressing the realities of those of us living every day with this crisis as PWAs and people who love PWAs.

FACT: Many PWAs now live longer after diagnosis due to experimental drug treatments, better information about nutrition and holistic health care, and due to the efforts of PWAs engaged in a continuing battle to define and save their lives.

FACT: The majority of AIDS cases in New York City are among people of color, especially women. Typically, women do not live long after diagnosis because of lack of access to affordable health care, a primary care physician, or even basic information about what to do if you have AIDS.

The PWA is a human being whose health has deteriorated not simply due to a virus, but due to government inaction, the inaccessibility of affordable health care, and institutionalized neglect in the form of heterosexism, racism, and sexism.

We demand the visibility of PWAs who are vibrant, angry, loving, sexy, beautiful, acting up and fighting back.

STOP LOOKING AT US; START LISTENING TO US

contrasted the way "postmodernist art has deliberately complicated the notion of 'the artist.'" AIDS did not, as die-hard modernists sometimes implied, occasion postmodernism, but it gave new urgency to the postmodernist insistence on the links between art and other forms of social experience. "Questions of identity, authorship, and audience—and the way all three are constructed through representation—have been central to postmodernist art, theory, and criticism," Crimp explained; "Young artists finding their place within the AIDS activist movement rather than the conventional art world have had reason to take these issues very seriously." More polemically, Grover insisted, "At the butt end of a modernism that reduces processes, materials, and the world of human collectivity to formalist play and analysis, AIDS provides many of us with a paradigm for the ineffectiveness of even the most rigorous modernisms."

Against the passivity encouraged by the conventional documentary photography protested by ACT UP, postmodernism opened useful paths for artists intimately and actively engaged with the effects of AIDS. Since the 1960s, Duane Michals (b. 1930) had been challenging the modernist idealization of the photographer who seizes a single all-revealing image from passive nature or from unsuspecting models in the public realm. Explaining his narrative series of small black-and- white prints with handwritten captions, Michals says, "The things that interested me were all invisible, metaphysical questions: life after death, the aura of sex . . . these are things you never see on the street." As early as 1978, Michals published a series of photographs not illustrative of but, as he put it, "sympathetic" to poems by Cavafy (the same poet illustrated by David Hockney), and in 1995 he illustrated Whitman's *Leaves of Grass*. These projects of imaginative collaboration with historical figures register Michals's allegiance to a gay literary tradition running aslant of both the heroic individualism of the avant-garde and the commercial forms of gay culture associated with urban spectacle. "Constantine Cavafy was a man of great feeling and even greater courage," Michals explained in the introduction of his series of photographs inspired by the poet. "And because he was a man who loved other men, he demonstrated his courage by making public these private passions . . . he wrote about the truth of himself with painful honesty, and the strength of his art protected him and freed others." Michals's engagement with the past and with the power of earnest, self-revelatory narrative recalls late-nineteenth-century figures like John Addington Symonds, who struggled to cast homosexuality as a mode of profound human connection. "Camp and drag don't interest me," Michals says; "Work that separates gay people from everyone else I think is very dangerous, and I have a lot of political anger about that. . . . I'm more concerned with male affection in the tradition of Walt Whitman." This background allowed Michals's art to register the powerful emotional complexity provoked by AIDS. His work of the

Figure 7.1. Duane Michals, *A Dream of Flowers* (1986), gelatin silver prints. Photograph courtesy of Pace/MacGill Gallery.

1980s traces a trajectory from fury (including fury at the freewheeling sex that often characterized urban gay subculture) to reconciliation. His *Smoking in Bed* (1984), a photograph of an empty hospital bed and wheelchair, was accompanied by a poem titled "You Are Gone," which includes the lines:

YOU ALWAYS HELD THIS CHANCE OF LIFE SO SLIGHT
CHEATING ME OF YOUR LOVE
AND TRADING THE UNIVERSE
FOR ANOTHER FACELESS FUCK…
THE TRUTH IS THAT SEX HAD BECOME A HABIT
LIKE SMOKING IN BED
AND YOU NEEDED TWO PACKS A DAY

This anger gives way, in the poem's final lines, to elegy:

CHRIST DIDN'T CRY WHEN YOU DIED
BUT I DID.
I EVEN CRIED IN MY DREAMS FOR YOU,
AND I KNOW SOMEWHERE YOU
YOU ARE CRYING YOUR DREAMS
FOR ME.

The stark photograph of the ugly, empty hospital equipment, however, emphasized the futility of lives squandered, especially in the context of its original publication in the literary and political magazine *Christopher Street*, named for a main thoroughfare in the gay neighborhood of Greenwich Village. Mourning seems, finally, to subsume anger in Michals's *A Dream of Flowers* (1986), where the unstoppable linguistic progression of the initials A. I. D. S. corresponds with a steady accumulation of flowers that gradually obscures the handsome, inert head (Figure 7.1). But the conflicting emotions that were so much a part of reactions to AIDS are powerfully registered throughout Michals's AIDS-related imagery.

The similarly elegiac work of Australian photographer William Yang (b. William Young, 1943) manifests a fonder attitude toward urban gay subculture. Yang started out as a photojournalist documenting gay discos and cast parties in Sydney's avant-garde theater scene in the

1970s, and then the extravagant drag and camp performances that evolved as part of the city's Mardi Gras celebrations during the '80s. Like Michals, Yang started adding handwritten captions to his photographs, creating narratives about his two threatened subcultures, the expatriate Chinese community and the urban gay art world in the age of AIDS (Figure 7.2). Unlike Michals's symbolic imagery, Yang documented the effect of AIDS on specific people in his community, often emphasizing the social networks that supported individual acts of fortitude in the face of devastating disease. In 1989 he began presenting his photographs in performances where his own voice guided viewers' experience of the images. Although he compares his work to poetry, Yang distances himself from the rarefied individualism of art-school-trained photographers, insisting on the photojournalistic origins of his work and its documentary insight into the "real world." Duane Michals also emphasizes his status as a self-taught artist unencumbered by the modernist presumptions of his era's art-school training. "I never went to photography school," he says. "If I had, I would have learned the big rules." On opposite sides of the globe and despite their different attitudes toward gay subculture, these two artists used similar combinations of text and image to create some of the earliest and most affecting work recording the emotional impact of AIDS on gay communities in the 1980s.

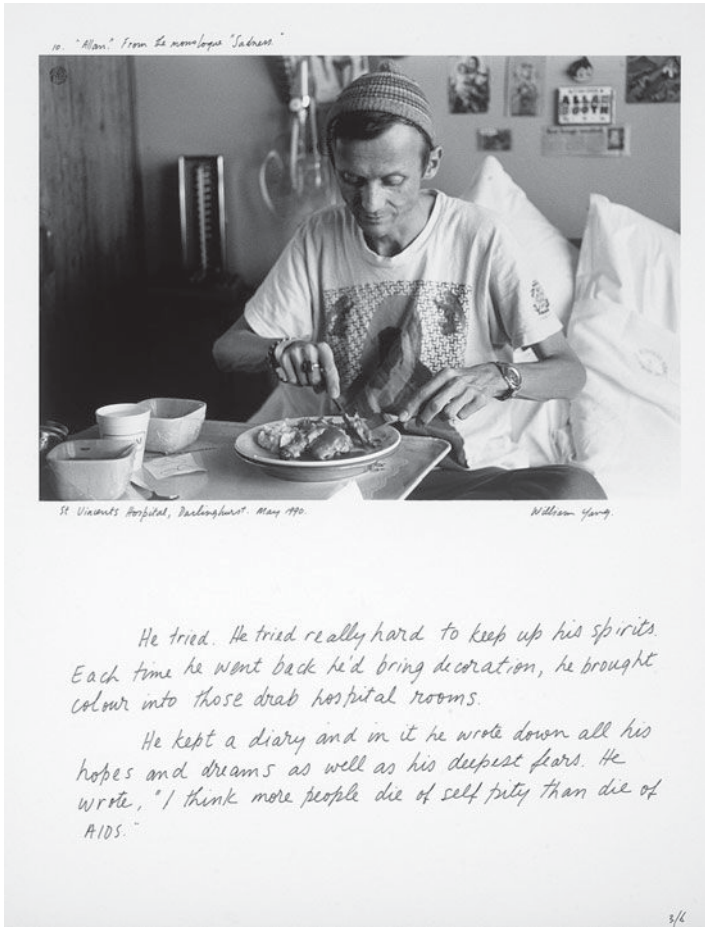


Figure 7.2. William Yang, *Allan, from the monolog "Sadness" #9*. © 2010 Artists Rights Society (ARS), New York/ADAGP, Paris.

Although debates over representations of AIDS played out primarily over photography, painters and sculptors were also deeply engaged in these issues. For many of these artists, there was no opposition between responses to AIDS and aspirations to beauty. Around 1985, the pervasiveness of sickness and death moved New York artist Ross Bleckner (b. 1949) to create some of the first paintings to address AIDS: a series depicting funerary urns and floral bouquets dissolving into black backgrounds. Bleckner relates the bursts of color in his

Figure 7.3. Ross Bleckner, *8,122+ as of January 1986*, oil on linen (122 x 102 cm), private collection. The numbers refer to the mounting total of American AIDS deaths.

work of this period to the marks left by the AIDS-related skin cancer Kaposi's Sarcoma: "I am trying to find a way of saying that what's obvious—and what's inevitable—could also be beautiful, and certainly that no one can judge others before they themselves have to face their own death." Analyzing this turn in his work, Bleckner says, "three years before, if someone had said to me that I was going to be painting flowers, I would have thought it ridiculous. AIDS, and fear, made me make the images a little more representational, and at the same time personal and more political. It made me identify myself more as a gay man" (Figure 7.3).

The elegiac multimedia work of Felix Gonzalez-Torres (1957–96) used everyday objects to create a wholly original and deeply moving language of mourning. An installation titled *Perfect Lovers* (1991) consisted of two battery-powered clocks showing the same time, raising awareness that both will falter and one will stop before the other. A billboard displayed the haunting image of an empty double bed, projecting an image of private loss into the public realm. In his "candy spill" installations, viewers may pick up and eat attractive foil-wrapped candies before learning that the pile of sweets reflects the weight of a specific individual (Figure 7.4). "I'm giving you this sugary thing; you put it in your mouth and you suck on someone else's body. And this way, my work becomes part of so many other people's bodies. It's very hot," Gonzalez-Torres explained. At the time he began this series, the artist was facing his lover's imminent death, a situation that relates the dwindling piles of candy to the idea of bodies emaciated by AIDS. Such connotations engage audiences in complex emotions concerning our own impulsive indulgence in pleasures that may damage our health (the "pieces just disperse themselves like a virus that goes many places," Gonzalez-Torres said) or distract us from the sufferings of others (here we are, eating shiny candy in a museum while other people sicken and die).

AIDS, ACTIVISM, AND VISUAL CULTURE

Figure 7.4. Felix Gonzalez-Torres, *"Untitled" (Portrait of Ross in L.A.)* (1991), cellophane-wrapped candies. © Felix Gonzalez-Torres Foundation, courtesy of Andrea Rosen Gallery, New York.

Such emotions—at once distraught and elegiac—expressed by individual artists responding to AIDS were multiplied exponentially by what might be counted among the most significant works of art of the twentieth and (because it continued to be added to) twenty-first centuries: the NAMES Project AIDS Memorial Quilt (Figure 7.5). But to define the Quilt as a work of art—even a great one—is in some ways to understate its impact: while the idea of artistic greatness connotes individual, or at least coherent, expression, the Quilt embodies a collective outpouring of conflicting emotions aroused by deaths due to AIDS. The Quilt began as a forty-panel memorial to be hung from San Francisco's city hall during the Lesbian and Gay Freedom Parade in June 1987. By October of that year, when it was displayed in Washington, D.C., during the National March for Gay and Lesbian Rights, it included almost two thousand three-by-six-foot fabric panels. A decade later, 40,000 panels from around the world combined to create a monument that could cover seventeen acres, not counting the canvas walkways every twenty-four feet that allow viewers access when it is displayed. By one recent count, more than 82,000 names are included in this ongoing memorial to people lost to AIDS. The Quilt is now too big to be exhibited all at once. When it was last displayed in its entirety in 1996, it filled the entire National Mall in Washington.

As its title implies, the NAMES Project AIDS Memorial Quilt was conceived to counter impulses to forget or dismiss people whose deaths were caused by AIDS. In a bitter irony, several panels contributed to the quilt are anonymous, and some have last names blacked out at the behest of anxious family members. Most of the panels, however, commemorate a named individual (or, occasionally, a parent and child). Although some are dedicated to celebrities, most of the panels were created by friends and family in a process of mourning movingly described in the books, films, and television coverage that became an important part of the Quilt's effect.

Corresponding with the demographics of AIDS in the United States, some of the people commemorated by the Quilt were not gay, and many of those who worked on it are heterosexual. But the Quilt originated within the gay community, and much of its emotional and visual power

Figure 7.5. The NAMES Project AIDS Memorial Quilt as displayed on the National Mall in Washington D.C., in 1993. Overview photograph courtesy of the NAMES Project Foundation.

derives from the intertwined history of art and sexual identity that has been traced in this book. To imagine a memorial appropriately created of materials such as "sequins, beads, fabric, and glue" (to quote a "wish list" for donated materials posted outside the NAMES Project's first storefront office in San Francisco's gay Castro neighborhood) reflects a camp sensibility related to the art in the *Extended Sensibilities* show and to other forms of gay spectacle (Figure 7.6). The activist intent and assertive public presence of this monument-scale handicraft project finds its nearest precedent in collective feminist projects such as Judy Chicago's *Dinner Party*. The Quilt's fusion of anger and power (conventionally masculine) with sentiment and sewing (conventionally feminine) offers compelling testament not only to the individuals the Quilt memorializes, but also to the values of the community being devastated by AIDS. Drawing on the legacies of camp culture and feminist activism, the Quilt incorporates common ideas of homosexuality as a blurring of gender boundaries. And the consistent foregrounding, in both the imagery of many panels and (especially) its publicity materials, of stories of mothers' love for their gay sons (and even for other sons whose families rejected them) transforms the Freudian pathologization of mother-love as the cause of male homosexuality into something powerfully affirmative. As a collaboratively produced artwork cared for and displayed by teams of volunteers in settings that bring out audiences of gay men and their allies, the Quilt insists on the value of the community created by the individuals it memorializes, their families and friends. Although this community vastly exceeds the demographic of homosexual men, it is premised on accepting, even treasuring, aesthetic and social forms associated with gay culture.

Figure 7.6. Members of the activist street performance group the Sisters of Perpetual Indulgence—Sister Sistah, Sister Dana Van Iquity, and Sister Kitty Catalyst—at work in the San Francisco office of the NAMES Project Quilt on Market Street. Photo by Rink.

Despite its political origins and implications, however, as the Quilt expanded, some activists criticized it for allowing the emotional catharsis of mourning to supplant activism aimed at preventing and treating AIDS. From this perspective, the crucial artistic responses to AIDS were the visuals associated with the activist group ACT UP. From the mid-1980s to the mid-1990s, loosely organized collectives using this name sprang up in cities around the globe to combat homophobic responses to AIDS and direct government funding toward medical research and AIDS prevention. ACT UP originated in New York, where many of its members worked in that city's vast art, theater, advertising, and mass-media businesses. Their expertise brought tremendous visual sophistication to AIDS activism, as they focused on efforts to change perceptions of AIDS and made "visibility" key to strategizing. Recognizing that they could communicate visually through television news, rather than relying on journalists to explain and interpret their agenda, ACT UP created striking posters and T-shirts that conveyed the activists' messages. In contrast to both the "craftsy" handmade graphics often associated with protest movements and to what one ACT UP designer called the "victim photography" that contributed to "the dominant representation of AIDS as pathetic images of people dying in hospital beds," ACT UP's elegant, angry visuals, multiplied through the mass media, made their provocative combinations of borrowed images and blunt text the look of AIDS activism worldwide.

ACT UP's signature style predated the formal organization of the group. The prehistory of ACT UP's best-known graphic demonstrates both the group's roots in Manhattan's art world and the way AIDS activism came to challenge conventional boundaries between art and commercial visual culture. Several months before ACT UP (later known as ACT UP New York) was founded early in 1987, a group of six activists designed and posted around downtown Manhattan the stark image of a pink triangle on a black background. Large, white, sans-serif letters spelled out the equation "SILENCE = DEATH," with smaller text condemning the indifference of authorities ranging from the American president to the Vatican. This text ended with the exhortation: "Gays and Lesbians are not expendable . . . Use your power . . . Vote . . . Boycott . . . Defend yourselves . . . Turn anger, fear, grief into action" (ellipses in original). The desperate energy behind this list of responses was what ACT UP harnessed in "actions," as they were called, directed against specific public figures and institutions. Several of the men who designed the "SILENCE = DEATH" posters were involved in the early ACT UP meetings, and they offered their logo and slogan—now minus the smaller text—for the group's actions (Figure 7.7). In November 1987, William Olander, a curator at the New Museum (the venue for the *Extended Sensibilities* show five years earlier), invited ACT UP to create a "visual demonstration" to be displayed for two months in the gallery's street-level window (Figure 7.8). Here, the logo and slogan were reproduced in neon over pictures of five public figures and an anonymous doctor superimposed against a backdrop taken from a photograph of the defendants at a Nazi war-

Figure 7.7. An ACT UP contingent bearing the group's trademark signs at the New York Gay Pride March on the twentieth anniversary of the Stonewall riots, 1989. Photograph by Christopher Reed.

crimes trial. Five concrete panels, evocative of tombstones or monuments, were inscribed with quotations from the figures depicted. From Jerry Falwell, a prominent televangelist preacher, for instance, came the statement "AIDS is God's judgment of a society that does not live by His rules." Cory SerVaas, a journalist Ronald Reagan appointed to his Presidential AIDS Commission on the strength of her claim that she had invented a cure for AIDS, was quoted as saying, "It is patriotic to have the AIDS test and to be negative." The doctor, quoted from a news report, said, "We used to hate faggots on an emotional basis. Now we have a good reason." The tombstone in front of Ronald Reagan's face was left blank to make the point that the president never mentioned AIDS during the first five years of the epidemic. An electronic display of text cycled facts about the quoted individuals and government inaction in the face of AIDS with each point preceded by "Let the record show . . ." and followed by the slogan of ACT UP: "Act Up, Fight Back, Fight AIDS."

Figure 7.8. *Let the Record Show . . .* (1987), multimedia installation in the window of the New Museum of Contemporary Art, New York. Photo credit: Robin Holland. Lights illuminated each of the speakers and their quotations sequentially, and then they all lit up at once in the moment this photograph documents.

The range of media in this display—from neon to mural photography—reflected the professional expertise in ACT UP's volunteer design collectives, whose work migrated between street activism and gallery exhibition. In 1990, ACT UP's design collective was invited to exhibit at the prestigious Venice Biennale, described by one art historian as the "ultimate validation by the art world." When their two posters—one a triptych with text condemning the pope's statements about AIDS and homosexuality—were confiscated by Italian customs officials, the controversy ensured that this image was seen on the news by a much broader audience than ever would have visited the exhibition. Impelled by the urgency of AIDS activism, ACT UP graphics shattered the boundaries that conventionally distinguish avant-garde art from mass-media imagery.

By the early 1990s, therefore, ACT UP graphics had taken their place, along with Wilde's aestheticism and Warhol's Pop imagery, as a visual style that transcended any individual artist or designer to signify a homosexual sensibility. ACT UP's visual style—angry and insistent on specific social reforms—might seem outside the aesthetic continuum running from Wilde to Warhol. But while audiences confronted by ACT UP graphics on television might focus on the political-protest messages of the text, viewers in gay communities ravaged by AIDS could recognize visual imagery that rewarded sensibilities attuned to the history of art outlined in this book. Juxtaposition of the similar profiles of a condom and a bishop in full regalia with his miter-topped head, for instance, indulges the campy humor associated with gay culture (Figure 7.9). ACT UP's protest signs, moreover, quoted quite specifically from Warhol, his Pop colleagues like Robert Indiana, and their precursors, Johns and Rauschenberg. Echoes of Warhol's brilliant coloring on celebrity faces (Figure 7.10), of Indiana's four-square LOVE (now spelling out AIDS or, in one instance, RIOT), of Rauschenberg's overlapping urban photographs, of Johns's targets and flags, addressed gay audiences in a visual idiom created from the history of gay art. Other images, such as the image of servicemen kissing in the popular "Read My Lips" graphic, evoked the history of homosexuality at mid-century (Figure 7.11). Even the pink triangle of the original ACT UP logo, as Douglas Crimp pointed out, required "foreknowledge" of its reference to the Nazi symbol for homosexual men, a history at the time not widely acknowledged outside gay communities. Such references reflected the ACT UP designers' immersion in gay culture and asserted the historical value of the communities now under siege. That ACT UP graphics seemed to speak for and from gay communities contributed to their ubiquity on T-shirts and stickers that often appeared independent of organized demonstrations, making the "visibility" they afforded as much an insistence on gay and lesbian identity as a demand to address AIDS.

Figure 7.9. ACT UP poster (1989), designed by Richard Deagle and Victor Mendolia. The pictured cleric is New York Archbishop John O'Connor, a powerful political voice opposing AIDS education and condom distribution.

As AIDS infections expanded significantly beyond the demographic of gay men in the United States, however, distinctions between AIDS-related and gay-visibility advocacy created tensions in ACT UP's ad-hoc organization. As early as 1988, ACT UP had organized actions (most famously at a major-league baseball game) and printed materials addressing heterosexual transmission of AIDS. Activists who wanted to prioritize gay and lesbian advocacy transferred ACT UP's visual style to new groups with names like Dyke Action Machine, Lesbian Avengers, and

Queer Nation (this last discussed in chapter 8). Like ACT UP, these groups were animated by a sense of urgency born of crisis, not specifically over AIDS, but over the increasingly virulent forms of homophobic repression that met newly visible expressions of gay and lesbian identity. Again, art was at the center of these debates.

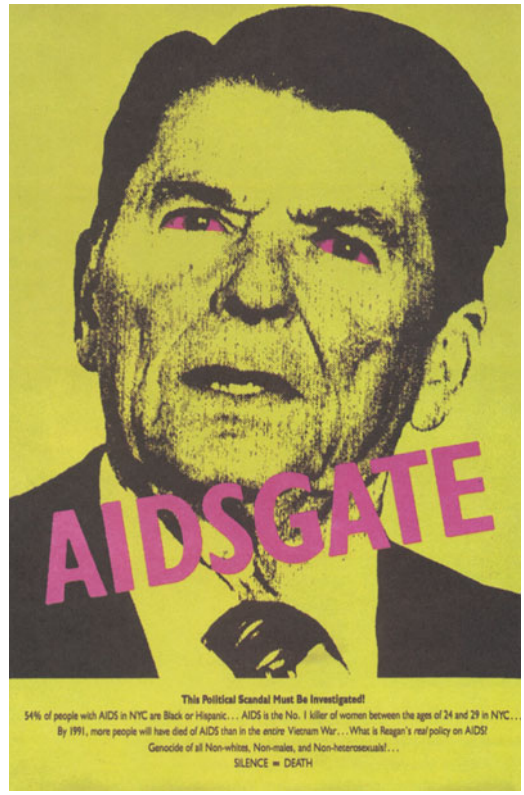


Figure 7.10. ACT UP poster (1987), designed by the Silence = Death project group.

HOMOPHOBIA AND VISUAL CULTURE

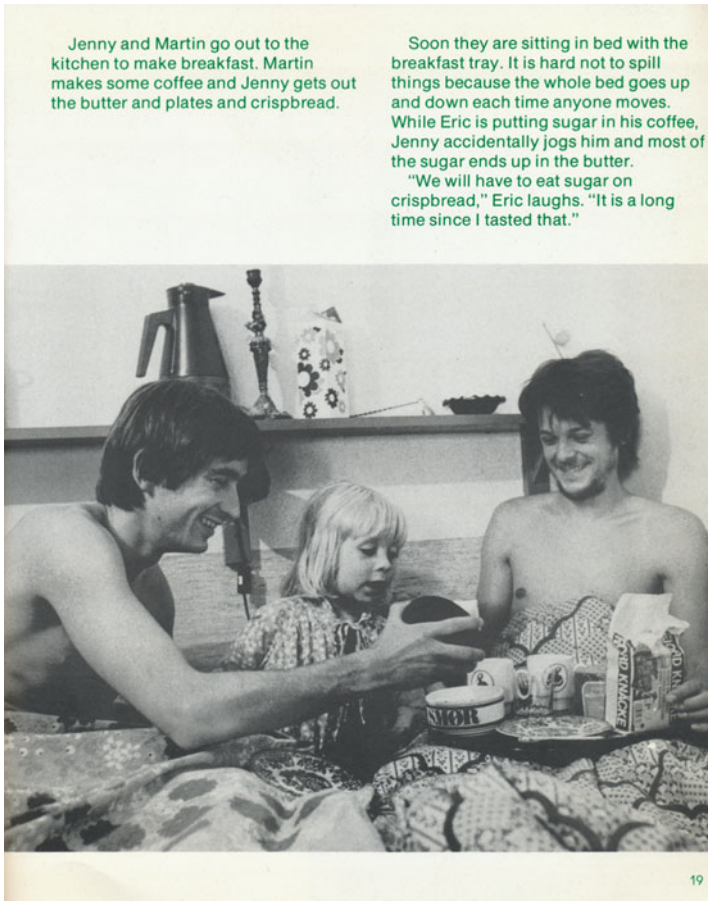
The end of the 1980s, especially in Britain and the United States, saw fierce public debates over images of homosexuality. In Britain, controversy raged over the picture book *Jenny Lives with Eric and Martin*, an affirmative treatment of same-sex parents (Figure 7.12). First published in Danish in 1981, the book was intended, according to its author Suzanne Bösche, to "give children relevant stories and, in a gentle way, to help them understand themselves and the society they live in." Seizing on the decision of some school libraries to stock the English translation of the book, right-wing politicians denounced it for normalizing presentations of homosexuals as people with families, ultimately pushing through a revision to the wording of Section 28 of the Local Government Act of 1988 specifying that local governments could not "promote the teaching in any maintained school of the acceptability of homosexuality as a pretended family relationship." Related strategies emerged in the United States, where legislators cited similar books—*Heather Has Two Mommies* (1989) and the *Daddy's Roommate* (1991)—to deny funding to schools that presented homosexuality as "a positive lifestyle alternative." Some local school boards and state-funded universities also adopted this language as a funding criterion and as justification for firing teachers who spoke out against homophobia. In 1987, politicians focused their attacks on a comic book designed by an AIDS-prevention organization in a project to reach at-risk non readers with sexy images that might motivate these men to practice "safer sex" (the term given to practices that reduced or eliminated the risk of transmitting the AIDS virus). Although the comic book was not produced with government money, the furor resulted in a law prohibiting federal funding for any AIDS-education materials that might "promote or encourage" sex, compromising health officials' efforts to reduce AIDS transmission and aligning the federal government with the position that homosexuality should remain—in a phrase famously debated at the Wilde trials almost a century earlier—"the love that dare not speak its name."

Figure 7.11. Marchers in an ACT UP contingent wearing T-shirts printed with the group's slogans and graphics at the 1989 Gay Pride March, New York City. Photo courtesy of John Davis.

It might be more accurate to say "the love that dare not show its face," for homophobic political strategies around 1990 focused on visual culture, exploiting the power of images to provoke emotional reactions in viewers who might respond more cerebrally to similar ideas expressed in text. The art historian Ernst Gombrich has argued that, because writing and speech depend far more on memorized code-systems to communicate than do images, which we decipher more intuitively, visual communication is characterized by both a broader range of interpretation and a more personal emotional impact than texts. This analysis is borne out in the history of American politicians' attacks on the National Endowment for the Arts (NEA). Initial efforts in 1985 to defund the NEA for supporting homoerotic poetry were ignored by the press and the public. Following their success in gaining attention for initiatives against image-based AIDS-education materials, however, right-wing groups began targeting art. These initiatives culminated in a much-publicized controversy over an exhibition of photographs by Robert Mapplethorpe (1946–89).

Mapplethorpe's career echoed patterns described (in chapter 5) in relation to Francis Bacon and Andy Warhol. Like Warhol, the young Mapplethorpe found dealers were unwilling to show art that pleasurefully fused camp sensibility with frank homoeroticism. Mapplethorpe's early collages combined photographs of neoclassical statuary and popular religious imagery, illustrations from old physique magazines, and, in one case, a magazine illustration of Warhol as a boy, all veiled behind layers

of spray paint or meshy fabric and mixed with scraps of elaborate wallpaper and kitschy frames. Abandoning collage, therefore, Mapplethorpe shifted to making two kinds of photographs. For galleries and collectors, he produced work that fell into the conventional categories of art—still lifes, portraits, and nudes—in an elegant black-and-white style so evocative of mid-century glamour photography that Douglas Crimp (in his pre-AIDS role as postmodern photography critic) denied Mapplethorpe's "retrograde" "borrowings" any claim to be avant-garde (Figure 7.13; also see Figure 8.11). Crimp later acknowledged, however, that his focus on Mapplethorpe's old-fashioned style made him overlook the transgressive power of Mapplethorpe's homoerotic subject matter, both in his carefully posed nudes and in his other category of work: photographs depicting sadomasochistic sex (Figure 7.14). In exhibitions in the late 1970s, Mapplethorpe stressed comparisons between his two kinds of work, using similar frames and visual echoes between the still lifes and what he called his "sex pictures" to challenge conventions of what is—and is not—beautiful or erotic. Definitions of artifice and reality were also provocatively blurred in Mapplethorpe's obviously staged images, whether they depict flowers or men engaged in specialized—often ritualized or highly costumed—sex. The art world responded enthusiastically to this imagery that, like Bacon's paintings, mixed conventional artistic mastery with violent homoeroticism. By 1980, Mapplethorpe came to believe that his sadomasochistic imagery was overwhelming his carefully calibrated comparisons of flowers and eroticized bodies, both "perfectly composed, perfectly lit . . . a different subject, same treatment, same vision, which is what it's all about." He complained, "I thought that it would make people see things differently. But what happened was that they took the cocks and fused them onto all the other [pictures] instead of the other way around. They forgot that the other pictures were even there." At this point he stopped making—and only rarely showed—such explicitly sexual work.


Jenny and Martin go out to the kitchen to make breakfast. Martin makes some coffee and Jenny gets out the butter and plates and crispbread.

Soon they are sitting in bed with the breakfast tray. It is hard not to spill things because the whole bed goes up and down each time anyone moves. While Eric is putting sugar in his coffee, Jenny accidentally jogs him and most of the sugar ends up in the butter.

"We will have to eat sugar on crispbread," Eric laughs. "It is a long time since I tasted that."

Figure 7.12. *Jenny Lives with Eric and Martin*, text by Susanne Bösche, illustrations by Andreas Hansen, published in an English translation in 1983 by the Gay Men's Press, London.

Figure 7.13. Robert Mapplethorpe, *Flowers, No. 3* (1984), gelatin print. © Robert Mapplethorpe Foundation. Used by permission.

The art world's fascination with Mapplethorpe's sexual imagery presaged his far more widespread posthumous notoriety. In 1989, right-wing politicians, fresh from debates over AIDS education imagery, seized upon Mapplethorpe's photographs in their fight against homosexuals' increasing visibility and acceptance. Although Mapplethorpe's posed, static photographs were generally less explicitly sexual than pictures printed in widely available pornographic magazines, politicians condemned their presentation as "art" in museums. That the artist, who was open about his participation in the sadomasochistic subculture he photographed, had recently died of AIDS heightened his symbolic usefulness. Politicians who had recently posed for the press ripping up exhibition catalogs to protest government funding of a show that included supposedly sacrilegious imagery by Cuban-American photographer Andres Serrano (b. 1950), shifted from this example (with its unwanted implications of Protestant contempt for Catholic religious iconography) to vilify a Mapplethorpe exhibition subtitled *The Perfect Moment*, which was partway through a seven-city museum tour partially funded by the National Endowment for the Arts. In response to the controversy, the show was canceled at its Washington, D.C., venue, the Corcoran Museum of Art. A smaller Washington gallery took the show for an abbreviated run, attracting almost 50,000 viewers in less than a month, and it then ran without incident in California. But when the show opened at its last venue, the Contemporary Arts Center in Cincinnati, Ohio, the local police herded visitors out of the museum and arrested the museum's director on charges of distributing obscenity and child pornography. This was the first time in the history of the United States that an art museum or its staff had been criminally prosecuted for the subject matter of images in an exhibition.

This combination of charges—like the furor over children's books depicting gay parents—exploited inchoate, but powerful, perceptions about the relationship between homosexuality and images. Longstanding associations of art and homosexuality collided variously with young children's love of pictures, anxieties over increasingly sexual and violent imagery in popular culture, the greater social visibility of gay men and lesbians, and parents' fears (stoked by popularized Freudian theory) that early-childhood experience might lead their own children to later manifestations of same-sex desire, now associated with AIDS. All of this opened the Mapplethorpe exhibition to homophobic exploitation. Congressmen denounced Mapplethorpe as a "child

pornographer" who "died of AIDS while spending the last years of his life promoting homosexuality." Presidential candidate Pat Buchanan denounced what he described as "a photographic exhibit by Robert Mapplethorpe, recently dead of AIDS, featuring men engaging in violent homosexual sex, with nude children thrown in." The false implication that Mapplethorpe threw nude children into scenes of sadomasochistic sex exemplified the fear-mongering by politicians whose attacks on Mapplethorpe's photographs, as analyzed by anthropologist Carol Vance, "permitted a temporary revival of a vocabulary—'perverted, filth, trash'—that was customarily used against gays but had become unacceptable in mainstream political discourse." In fact, the two pictures of children in the exhibition—one a naked boy, the other a girl pulling up her dress—were distinct portraits and no more provocative than many family photos. But the continuing power of such images, in such a context, to provoke outrage was demonstrated when a scholarly book analyzing censorship and homosexuality in the arts, Richard Meyer's *Outlaw Representation*, was judged to violate Canadian antipornography laws for reproducing one of these photographs.

Figure 7.14. Robert Mapplethorpe, *Helmut* (1979), gelatin print. © Robert Mapplethorpe Foundation. Used by permission.

In the United States, political efforts to return homosexuality to the status of the unspeakable and invisible continued through a concerted attack on the NEA. Repeatedly citing the Mapplethorpe show, politicians amended the law that created the NEA in order to prohibit it from funding the creation or display of art "which may be considered obscene," a standard they defined as "including but not limited to depictions of sadomasochism, homoeroticism, the sexual exploitation of children, or individuals engaged in sex acts." Four performance artists had their 1990 NEA grants rescinded on the basis of these standards. (After a three-year legal battle, these grants were restored, although changes in procedures and personnel made it difficult for artists dealing with sexuality to be awarded grants in the future.) Amid these debates in 1989, the NEA rescinded a grant from a Manhattan gallery for mounting *Witnesses Against Our Vanishing*, an exhibition of AIDS-related work curated by photographer Nan Goldin (b. 1953). Goldin, who described herself as "living with AIDS" because so many of her friends and colleagues were sick or dead, wrote in the catalog introduction:

> Over the past year four of my most beloved friends have died of AIDS. Two were artists I had selected for this exhibit. One of the writers for this catalogue had become too sick to write. And so the tone of the

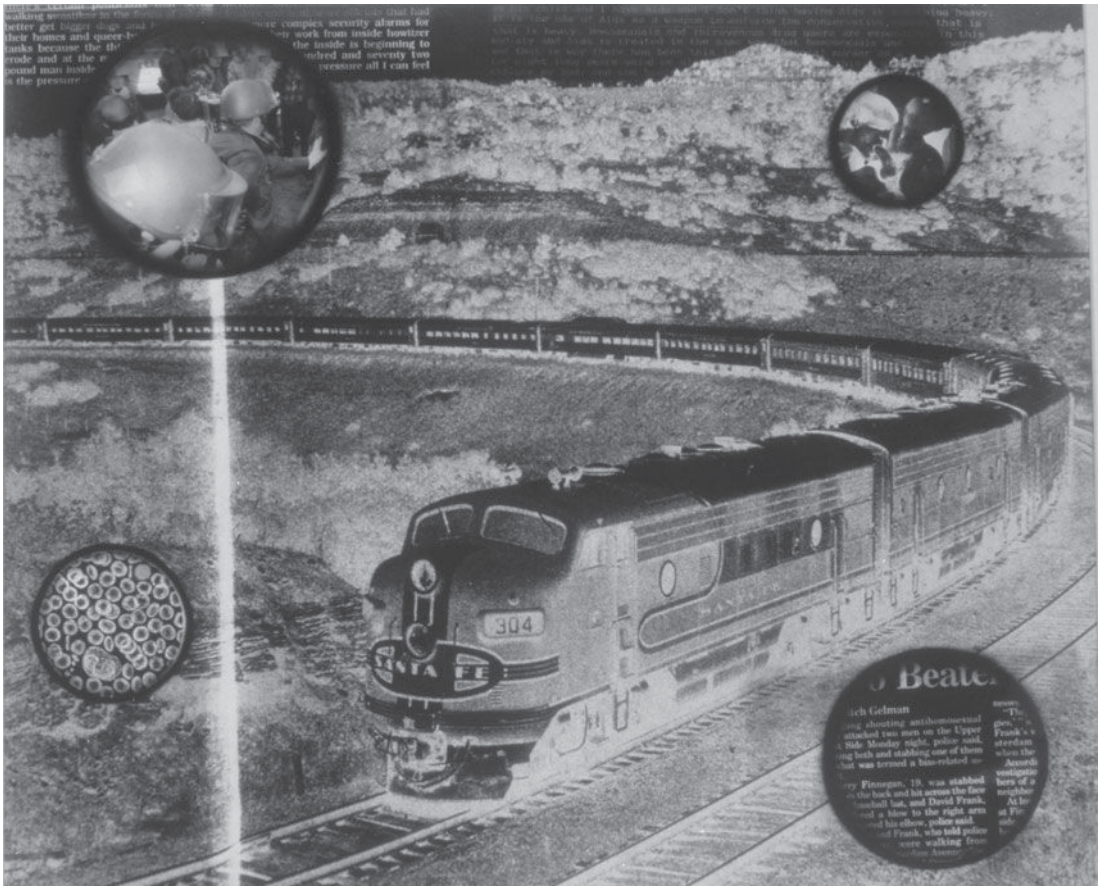
exhibition has become less theoretical and more personal, from a show about AIDS as an issue to more of a collective memorial.

Goldin described her "sense of powerlessness in the face of this plague," saying: "I want to empower others by providing them a forum to voice their grief and anger in the hope that this public ritual of mourning can be cathartic in the process of recovery, both for those among us who are now ill and those survivors who are left behind."

Anger was indeed apparent in photographs contributed by David Wojnarowicz. Following his early photographs imagining Rimbaud on the New York piers (discussed in chapter 6), Wojnarowicz's later photos included an image of graffiti, asserting with misspelled vehemence, "Fight AIDS, KILL A QUERE." These were accompanied in the *Witnesses* exhibition catalog by his equally angry essay, which described homophobic responses to AIDS and ruminated over what "fantasies give me distance from my outrage for a few seconds," among them dousing with gasoline and setting on fire "the repulsive senator from zombieland who has been trying to dismantle the NEA for supporting the work of Andres Serrano and Robert Mapplethorpe." Citing this essay, the NEA's director took the unprecedented step of rescinding a grant already approved for the show. Although protests from prominent artists and threats of legal action led to the restoration of the grant with the provision that the money could not fund the catalog, Wojnarowicz was dismayed that the art world's response focused on narrowly legal issues, with few voices defending the validity of his perspective. The controversy made clear, his friend Philip Yenawine recalls, "the paper-thin line of defense" the avant-garde offered to artists who confronted homophobic power directly: "The invisibility of the queer in the larger society existed even here. It hurt him deeply to be betrayed by the world that had given him life."

Shortly thereafter, Wojnarowicz seized upon another opportunity to confront homophobic political forces, when a right-wing religious organization calling itself the American Family Association reproduced details from his photo-collages to attack the NEA (Figure 7.15). A flier headlined "Your Tax Dollars Helped Pay for These 'Works of Art'" enclosed in an envelope blaring "Caution: Contains Extremely Offensive Material" was sent to thousands of fundamentalist Christian churches, to radio and television stations, and to every member of Congress. Wojnarowicz successfully sued the group under a law that forbids the purposeful misrepresentation of an artist's work, forcing the AFA to mail a correction to the same recipients, although the judge awarded the artist just one symbolic single dollar in damages.

Ultimately legal and political processes turned back some of the most extreme forms of homophobic scapegoating and censorship that marked reactions to AIDS. The American ban on sex-related AIDS education was canceled in 1992, and Britain's Section 28 was repealed in 2003. The



prosecution of the Cincinnati Contemporary Arts Center and its director failed in 1990, even though the judge prevented the jury—which had been selected to exclude as biased anyone who regularly visited museums or studied art—from seeing Mapplethorpe's still-life or portrait photographs that provided context for the seven contested images on display. The jury, nevertheless, affirmed the compositional artistry of Mapplethorpe's contested sexual photographs, finding that they met a legal standard of "serious artistic value" that precluded their classification as obscene.

While the history of legal battles over the exhibition and publication of sexually provocative art reflects well on the tenacity of those who defended the legal protections for imagery that represents the perspectives of sexual minorities, their victories came at substantial cost. Time and money that could have been used to stem the spread of AIDS was absorbed into these fights over imagery. The reorganization of the NEA to avoid controversy made it unlikely that sexually provocative work could be funded in the future, and the verdict in the arts-center trial left American museums facing the legal possibility that sexual imagery presented in a less conventionally masterly style could

Figure 7.15. David Wojnarowicz, untitled element from *Sex Series* (1988–89), gelatin silver print. Courtesy of The Estate of David Wojnarowicz and P.P.O.W Gallery, New York, NY. This photographic series combined imagery evoking the authority of medical science (here a microscopic view of blood platelets), the news media (an article about attacks on gay men), and the law (riot police at an ACT UP demonstration) with old photographs reproduced as negatives, some from pornography of the 1950s.

Figure 7.15. (*Continued*) The small scenes quoted from old pornography were reproduced as examples of the artist's work in a flier attacking the National Endowment for the Arts for helping to fund a university art gallery where Wojnarowicz exhibited.

be prosecuted as obscene. The chilling effects of these developments are taken up in the following chapter. Here it is important to conclude by noting a shift, by the late 1980s, in popular perceptions of art's relationship to sexual identity. By the turn of the millennium—a century after Wilde made the aesthetically sensitive, persecuted homosexual a paradigm for the modern artist and a quarter century after Warhol made camp a paradigm for postmodernism—the connotations of "gay art" equally included the "in-your-face" anger, political engagement, and sexual explicitness associated with ACT UP, Mapplethorpe, and Wojnarowicz.

CHAPTER 8

QUEER AND BEYOND

It is, of course, dangerous to generalize about a decade that is barely over; a century from now, we will have a much stronger consensus about what became of postmodernism . . . and a century later, a different consensus may prevail. Whatever the eventual consensus(es), however, it is important to recognize that history always reflects the purposes of the recorder—we select stories from the past in order to make sense of who we are (or aspire to be) today. Writings on recent history make this process especially clear, for they impose a narrative on events that continue to unfold in all their daily complexity, and these acts of narration become themselves documents of the history they seek to chronicle.

I WROTE THOSE words in the early 1990s for an article that outlined a shorter version of the previous chapter's argument for the importance of feminist and gay/lesbian activist art to the development of postmodernism. After reminding readers that interpretations of contemporary art are part of the phenomenon they describe, I proposed a narrative of reconciliation between the apolitical art-world avant-garde and activists working to change attitudes about sex and gender. Looking back over a decade later, I must confess that that reconciliation has not happened—at least not yet.

On the contrary, as the conclusion of the previous chapter notes, collapse from within and attacks from without undercut activist art in the 1990s. By 1994, veterans of the feminist art movements of the 1970s were noting with dismay that the art world seemed to "submerge, deny, or distort" the history of activist feminist art while rewarding artists who threw an alibi of irony over their return to conventionally passive, even infantilized, images of women. At the same time, curators noticed a dramatic drop in new art about AIDS. Gran Fury, ACT UP New York's main image-making collective, disbanded in 1995, and critics who had found their voice writing about the AIDS crisis now felt it was, as David Dietcher put it, "nearly intolerable to be writing on the subject. I feel weighted down by a sense of inertia, by the conviction that I have already said everything I have to say." Even the NAMES Project's massive AIDS Memorial Quilt (discussed in chapter 7) fell victim to the waning of

popular concern about AIDS as plans for its permanent conservation and display collapsed amid wrangling among board members. To some extent, AIDS-related art initiatives were victims of their own success in raising awareness that reoriented medical research and social services to address AIDS more effectively. But to a greater extent, these initiatives were simply victims, as many participating artists died and others grew discouraged by the indifference or hostility of art institutions and the culture at large. "People just can't scream all the time" was how curator Thomas Sokolowski explained the shift away from AIDS-related art during the 1990s.

If, as this book has proposed, the histories of modern art and homosexuality have been closely intertwined, then the faltering of art centered on issues of sex and gender suggests important implications for current understandings of both art and sexual identity. An initial look at recent history suggests that, for the first time in at least a century and a half, the concepts of art and homosexuality are drifting apart. Rapid changes in ideas of what it means to be either an artist or a homosexual have shattered these identities into so many competing concepts that neither retains enough meaning to be much use in defining the other. Art critics at the dawn of the new millennium fell back on terms like *pluralism* and *globalism* to signal the huge variety within contemporary art. Their announcements of the death of postmodernism coincided with elegies following, as the titles of two recent books put it, *The Rise and Fall of Gay Culture* (by Daniel Harris) and *The End of Gay (and the Death of Heterosexuality)* (by Bert Archer). Another provocative title was that of a well-received exhibition in New York in the summer of 2006: *The Name of This Show Is Not: Gay Art Now*. Its curator explained the title, saying, "It seems to me the notion of Gay Art is somewhat passé and this show is an ode to its passing." Reviewers noted that, despite "a smattering of activist art, the show is mostly apolitical." Trumpeting his decision to include some artists who were no longer living (Andy Warhol among them) and some who were not gay or did not "identify as gay" (a distinction that emphasized rejection of this identity), the curator's statement was purposefully ambiguous: "Maybe the link being made is about sensibility, maybe it's about society." An emphasis on "sensibility" might have tied this exhibition to the *Extended Sensibilities* show in 1982 (discussed in chapter 6). But although part of the 2006 show was an installation re-creating the dwelling of a drag queen known as Tabboo!, which nostalgically recalled the campy extravagance celebrated in *Extended Sensibilities*, no such historical continuities were proposed. Instead, what was foregrounded in 2006 was doubt: doubt about the relationship of "sensibility" to "society" and about the relevance of the term *gay* to a time identified as "now."

It is significant that the collapse of "postmodernism" as a way of understanding contemporary art and the fragmentation of gay and lesbian identity occurred simultaneously. Neither change caused the other,

but together they reflect broad social trends linked to forces as varied as the rise of the Internet and increased global commerce. Writers on art and on sexual politics—often without reference to one another—used similar terms in worrying over recent changes, citing trends toward political conformity across increasingly integrated industrialized cultures, where specialized commodities have absorbed once-subversive aesthetic and sexual styles into "market niche" forms of consumption.

This critique is somewhat unfair. The newfound variety in both contemporary art and sexual identity is, in part, an overdue recognition of diversity long ignored by experts competing to establish master narratives that would order their professional fields into manageable hierarchies. One salutary result of "postmodern" challenges to modernist orders in virtually every area of human endeavor may be a loss of faith in hierarchical orders—and authoritative order-makers. Although art critics in the postmodern era often bemoaned their loss of authority—what Hal Foster recognized as a "lack of social function" for critics—readers of this book may find it hard to share Foster's nostalgia for what he idealized as Clement Greenberg's "highly ethical, rigorously logical enterprise that set out to expunge impurity and contradiction" (on Greenberg's role in policing conventional norms of sex and gender, see chapter 5). In contrast, the 1990s saw artists and critics with a taste for "impurity and contradiction" demand recognition for sexual identities they called "queer."

QUEER

The rise of the term *queer* reflected the loss of faith in the coherence of "gay" or "lesbian" identity, and was intended to unite a wide range of constituencies opposed to conventional notions of sexuality and gender. The term's denotation of something odd or abnormal was exploited as a badge of honor by the loose-knit political coalition Queer Nation, which was founded in 1990 on the model of ACT UP, but with the aim of focusing on issues other than AIDS. Queer Nation popularized the term *queer* with a younger generation of activists trying to embrace a wide range of sex/gender nonconformists in an identity that was both oppositional and freely chosen. Philosopher Judith Butler's influential 1990 book *Gender Trouble* posited gender as a form of performance, rather than the inevitable expression of an interior essence, citing drag—in which a performer consciously adopts the signifiers of a desired identity—as the paradigm for all gender performance. In addition to contributing a powerful intellectual impetus to the resurgence of drag as a popular form of entertainment in the 1990s, "performance theory," as it came to be called, emphasized the individual's ability to choose—and to change—identities.

If queers, in theory, could move freely among forms of gender or sexuality, what they shared was an antagonism to normativity, which

included efforts by some "gays" and "lesbians" to have these identities accepted as forms of normality premised on biological fixity. Harmony Hammond, a pioneer in the lesbian-feminist art movements of the 1970s (discussed in chapter 6), welcomed the emergence of "'queer' as a term that confronts. It claims an in-your-face sexuality and political consciousness." In 2000, she wrote: "I still like the term and use it often . . . as a challenge to definitive categories of sex and gender or when I want to include the boys." But other self-identified lesbians, especially those grounded in the separatist ideals of the 1970s, countered that a catch-all term like *queer* subsumed women's history and issues into an identity often associated with men. Many self-identified gay men also rejected *queer* as a term still used as a form of abuse (if the misspelled "QUERE" of the graffiti photographed by Wojnarowicz is any indication). Early ambitions that *queer* could unite diverse constituencies foundered over such debates, which fragmented "gay" and "lesbian" identities along generational lines.

If "queer" failed to unite, however, it nevertheless succeeded in acknowledging varieties of minority sexual identity within and outside Europe and North America. The performative element in the association of *queer* with a broad range of counter-normative identities was seized upon to challenge dominant race and class hierarchies reflected within earlier constructions of "gay" and "lesbian" identity. Gloria Anzaldúa, who described herself as "a Chicana, *tejana,* working-class, dyke-feminist poet, writer-theorist," complained in her 1991 essay "To(o) Queer the Writer" that "'lesbian' is a cerebral word, white and middle class, representing an English-only dominant culture, derived from the Greek word *lesbos*. . . . When a 'lesbian' names me the same as her she subsumes me under her category. I am of her group but not as an equal part, not as a whole person—my color erased, my class ignored." In contrast to the limitations she associated with "lesbian" identity, Anzaldúa said, "the new mestiza queers have the ability, the flexibility, the malleability, the amorphous quality of being able to stretch this way and that way. We can add new labels, names and identities as we mix with others."

Such claims to dynamic "disidentifications," as José Estaban Muñoz puts it, were welcomed for offering "us a reprieve from the now stale essentialism versus antiessentialism debates," though claims for these new terminologies risk overstatement: it's not clear why a Greek-derived term evidences "English-only" culture, and "lesbian" identity was never as homogenous as its presentation here. If a "disidentification [as] the third mode of dealing with dominant ideology that neither opts to assimilate within such a structure nor strictly opposes it" was neither as new nor as distinct from earlier constructions of sexual identity as was sometimes claimed, articulations of queerness that stressed dynamism and diversity succeeded in creating new audiences for artists whose work engages the relationship between sexual identity and other forms of difference. Critical attention turned to Nahum B. Zenil (b. 1947), for

Figure 8.1. Nahum B. Zenil, Untitled (1979), mixed media on paper, Jack S. Blanton Museum of Art, University of Texas at Austin. Photo by Rick Hall. Zenil pictures himself at a popular rally carrying a flag on which his lover's face substitutes for the symbol of Mexican nationalism while a crowd of men bears a banner of their bedroom.

example, whose autobiographical imagery integrates his identities as both gay and Mexican. Zenil combined images of himself and his lover with family pictures, religious iconography, and popular imagery in a style that evokes Mexican folk art and murals (Figure 8.1).

Zenil's art evokes a stable identity where "Mexican" and "gay" overlap, but many younger artists emphasized the mutability of both national and sexual identity. The photographer Sunil Gupta (b. 1953), for instance, claims various identities as a gay, London-based, Indian-born Canadian educated in New York and London. In the early 1980s, his technically accomplished documentary series were premised on the stability of outsider identities: one series records the residents of a village in India, another gay and lesbian couples in England. By the mid-1980s, however, Gupta was engaging the instability of identities. As part of his *Social Security* series (1988), Gupta captioned a photograph of his mother with, "I like my apartment in Montreal. I am a Canadian citizen and when I say I am Indian, people think I am from the North." *Reflections of the Black Experience* (commissioned for the exhibition *The Black Experience* in 1986) captioned portraits of British Asians in quotidian settings with identity labels—"Shopkeepers," "Gay," "Artist," "Immigrant," "Elderly"—suggesting the inadequacy of any single term to summarize a person. Through the late 1980s, Gupta's work continued to worry at fixed identity categories and ideas about the objectivity of perception. His *No Solutions* series (1989) juxtaposes kitschy images of Indian goddesses, quotations from an Indian medical official advocating criminalization of sex with foreigners to control

AIDS, and photographs of himself and his partner making love. This collage sensibility carried through Gupta's subsequent installations and exhibitions, which involve an autobiographical component in which the "self" he depicts is collaged from his own photographs and images from popular culture. Gupta's *Trespass* (Figure 8.2) series (1992–1995) and his *Homelands* series (2001–2003) engage not only his multiple geographic identifications, but also his ambivalent and changing attitudes toward other forms of identity: being half of a couple, being someone with AIDS.

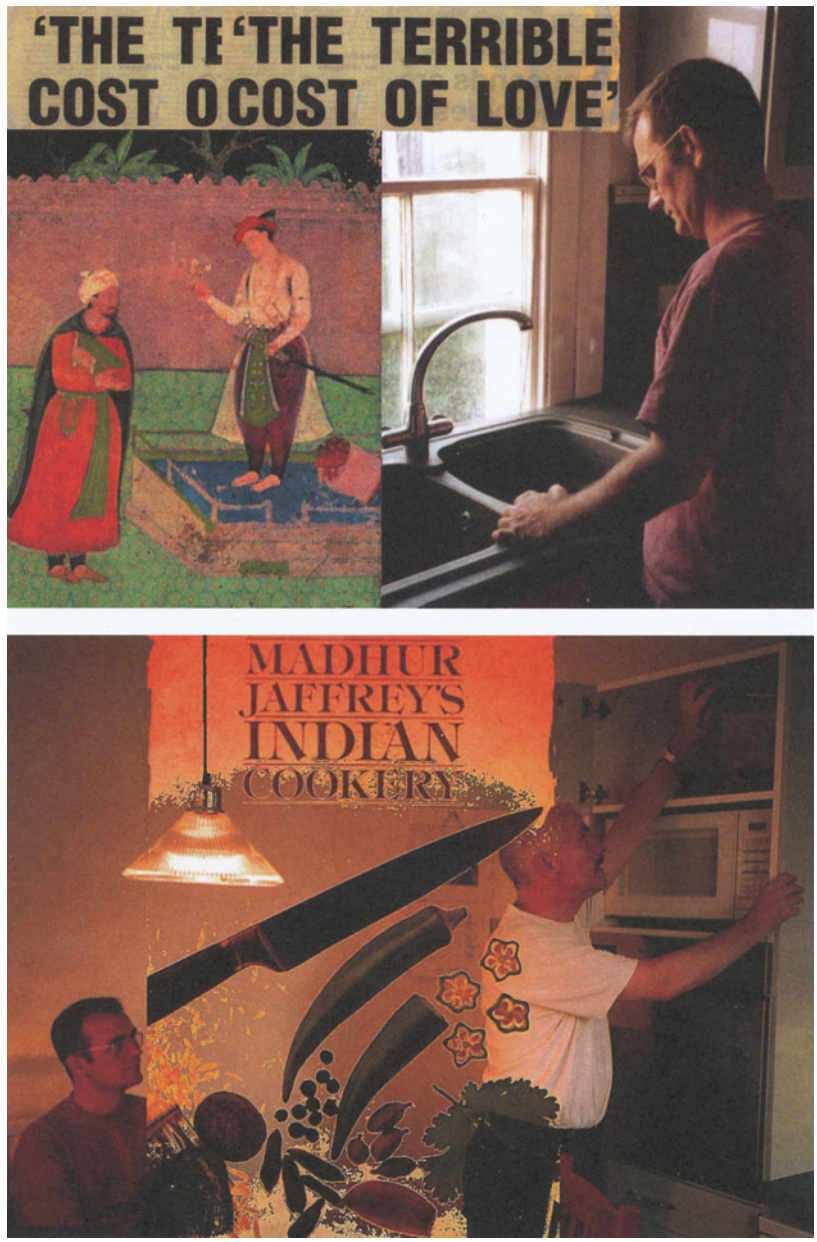


Figure 8.2. Sunil Gupta, two of ten images from part 2 of *Trespass* (1993), inkjet print on paper.

Gupta's presentation of identity as a changing response to circumstance links his art to postmodern theories of identity as performance, rather than as an essential, unchanging core attribute. Readers here may recall the debate about the nature of homosexuality outlined in this book's introduction, and recognize the turn toward *queer* in arguments by scholars like David Halperin, who emphasized the differences between current and ancient forms of same-sex eroticism. If, as Halperin suggests, ideas about what we call "homosexuality" have changed over time, there is less reason to assume that it is experienced or enacted the same way by different people today—or even by the same person at different times.

Claims for the performability and mutability of identity, both ethnic and sexual, animate the art of another photographer who rose to international fame at this period, Yasumasa Morimura (b. 1951). Morimura used elaborate sets and costumes to impersonate paintings and film images that signify the Occidental standards of identity and success that seem to be becoming global norms. Morimura's subversion of fixed ideas of cultural identity combined with his critique of gender identities as his art explored the "neither-male-nor-female waterline" he compares to waves at the border between land and sea. Most of Morimura's personifications of Western art involve him playing a woman's role, not to create an illusion of his femaleness (any more than of his whiteness), but, in the artist's words, "to put forth a neither-male-nor-female sexually ambiguous realm" (Figure 8.3).

The term *queer* is closely associated with such challenges to the binaries of sex and gender. Self-identified "queer" New Yorker Deborah Kass (b. 1952) makes silk-screen prints and photographs that quote famous works by Andy Warhol—with certain crucial substitutions: Gertrude Stein for his Chairman Mao, Barbra Streisand (cross-dressed as a young Talmudic scholar in the 1983 movie *Yentl*) for his Elvis Presley, and her own image for Warhol's self-portraits, among others (Figure 8.4). Kass calls Warhol "the first big queer-boy artist," and describes her impersonation of him as "multiplying drag upon drag upon drag." Kass's gender play is rooted in a strong sense of her own identity as both lesbian and Jewish. To create her work, she says, "I think, what would it look like if Andy was a lesbian . . . not to mention my age and a Jewish woman?" What marks Kass's art as queer is its energetic flouting of normativity and its delight in sensibilities shared among minority cultures. Jewish and queer culture, for instance, share a concern with "passing" (disguising or discarding nonnormative identity in order to function as part of the majority) and relish subversive humor, two qualities that Kass's art exemplifies.

Issues of passing are crucial to constructions of transgender identities that (as noted in chapter 1) contributed to the fragmentation of gay and lesbian identity under the rubric of "queer." For some who claim "trans" identity, the point is to assert an identity between conventional poles of

sex and gender. For others, the goal is to pass from one sex, which they feel they inhabit nonnormatively, and to become a member of the opposite sex in the binary system that structures so much of European (and European-derived) cultures. Scholar Judith Halberstam proposes this distinction as the difference between *transgender* and *transsexual,* but terminology here is unsettled, and self-identified "grassroots activist" Leslie Feinberg proposes *trans* or *transgender* "as a term uniting the entire coalition."

Figure 8.3. Yasumasa Morimura, *Dublonnage (Marcel)* (1988), photograph. Courtesy of the artist, Luhring Augustine, New York, and Regen Projects, Los Angeles. Echoing the pose of Marcel Duchamp's drag persona Rrose Sélavy (discussed in chapter 4), Morimura doubles the gender impersonation with race, including—along with two hats—two sets of hands with different skin tones.

In either case, visuality is crucial to signifying relationships to the conventional sex/gender system. Photography, therefore, has been crucial to defining transgender identities. Feinberg's 1996 book *Transgender Warriors* opens by emphasizing the inclusion of "photos from cultures all over the world," explaining, "I've presented their images as a challenge to the currently accepted Western dominant view that woman and man are all that exist, and that there is only one way to be a woman or a man." Jay Prosser's 1998 book *Second Skins: The Body Narratives of Transsexuality* was more dogmatic, contesting the idea of gender as performance by asserting, "In *really* changing sex . . . transsexuals concluded a body narrative." The conclusion of this book "turned to photographs," as Prosser later recalled: "The apparent referentiality of photography, its distinctive feature for showing its referent unmediated, seemed to me to correspond perfectly to the referentiality of sex at the end of transsexual narratives," including "*my own* completion of a transsexual narrative as a female-to-male transsexual." As the tone of this recollection implies, Prosser subsequently came to doubt both the power of photographs and sex-reassignment surgery as final proofs of the real. He writes movingly, "What's painful about photography and gender reassignment surgery both is that, in spite of how close they are to reproducing the referent, to making it present (and I emphasize they are our best means of approximation), they ultimately fail." It is undoubtedly naive to imagine a definitive conclusion to the possible meanings of an image or to the experiences

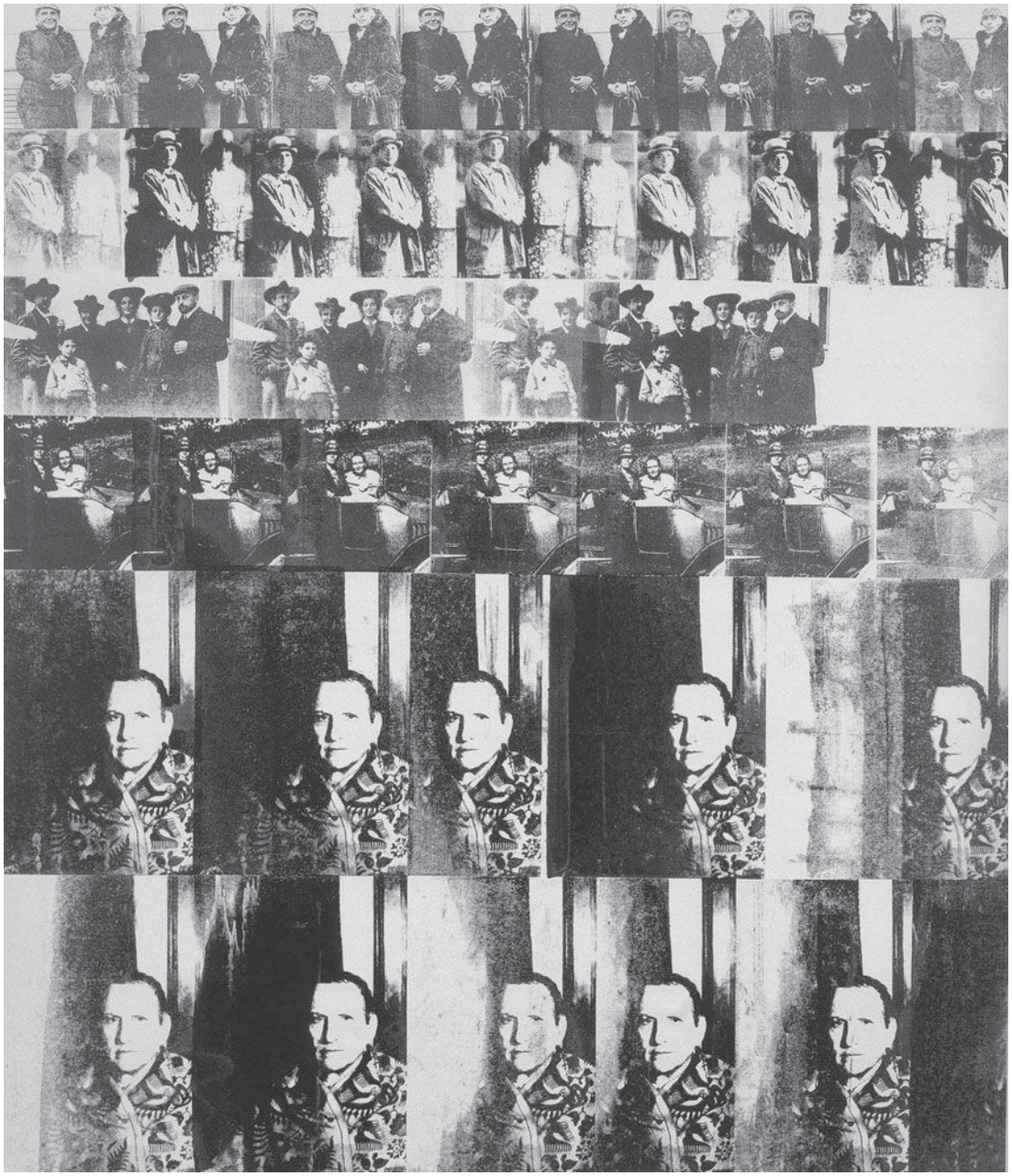


Figure 8.4. Deborah Kass, *Let Us Now Praise Famous Women* (1994–95), silk-screen ink and acrylic on canvas. Photograph courtesy of the artist. In a complex set of substitutions, Kass here used photographs of

of sexual identity in either the life of an individual or the history of a culture. Rather than presuming the self-evident truth in deployments of photography as documentary, the most influential work of artists who generate gender-troubling photography has been frankly polemical and attentive to both varieties of self-fashioning and the importance of the communities in which such variety is valued.

Love Bites, a 1991 book of photographs by Della Grace (b. 1957, later called Del LaGrace Volcano), sparked enormous controversy for its images

Figure 8.4. (*Continued*) Gertrude Stein to re-create the effect of Andy Warhol's 1962 silk-screen series based on photographs of Robert Rauschenberg and his family. Warhol's title, *Let Us Now Praise Famous Men*, quotes the Bible, but more immediately references the title of a famous book of Walker Evans's photographs of poverty-stricken Alabama share croppers during the Great Depression. Kass's reworking of the title engages issues of modern art's relationship to celebrity and social activism as well as identities grounded in gender, sexuality, ethnicity, and class.

of women at sexual play in costumes ranging from brides to gay leathermen. Challenging both conventional gender norms and feminist ideologies premised on women's difference from men, *Love Bites* was banned by customs officials in the United States and Canada and by some feminist bookstores. Grace continued to disrupt "the bi-gendered status quo" by taking the name Del LaGrace Volcano, clearly a provocative act of will, which accompanied her marriage to a "queer man," Johnny Volcano. Far from using marriage to settle into a conventional feminine role, Del LaGrace Volcano embraced identification as a hermaphrodite at this point. The term *hermaphrodite* drives from the mythological Greek figure Hermaphroditus, the son of Hermes and Aphrodite who was rendered androgynous by fusion with a nymph. Although venerable—its first use is dated to 1398—the term is controversial. Its use is discouraged by the medical establishment, which has coined the phrase *disorder of sexual development* (DSD) to refer to the estimated 1–2 percent of the population who are born physically intersexed (estimates vary depending on the different physical and chromosomal measurements used and because of shortcomings in reporting, related to social stigmas associated with deviations from binary gender norms). For years, doctors used surgery—often shortly after birth—to "correct" intersexed bodies into the image of maleness and femaleness. As a self-identified hermaphrodite, Volcano allowed his/her facial hair to grow, a provocative choice that asserts androgyny as a natural state and draws attention to the rigorous artifice many women undertake in order to appear "naturally" feminine. Confronting social difficulties with such basic issues as pronouns for those outside the gender binary, Volcano cheerfully proposes *herm* to reject choosing between *her* or *him.* For herm, then, "permission of play" motivates art that foregrounds ideas of gender as a form of performance involving not only gender-coded clothing, but hairstyles (including facial hair), muscle building, tattoos, and dildos. Volcano argues that sexual play destabilizes conventional knowledges, where "to know is sometimes to allow oneself to become blinded by a certainty that prevents clarity of vision." Disrupted conventions, therefore, allow new levels of insight: "Questions begin to form. . . . It is the kind of instability that creates the potential for new knowledge to be acquired, although to know is not always to love" (Figure 8.5).

This ideal of constant change is part of the challenge queerness poses to conceptions of sexual identity as permanently embodied. This prospect may be unsettling. Without an assumption of unbidden orientation, homosexuality seems to be something that could be easily chosen or unchosen in myriad ways. Queer theory, of course, responds that the same is true of heterosexuality, and destabilizing that category is part of the promise of queerness. More troubling for discussions of subcultural identity are the implications of rejecting assumptions about shared core feelings or experiences associated with sexual identity: without these, what basis is there for commonality among sexual minorities? Because, for self-identified queers, commonality cannot be assumed and must be

constantly reinvented or reaffirmed, queer communities become at once both crucial and fragile. Communities, therefore, are the focus of many queer-identified artists. Del LaGrace Volcano insists, "The notion of family has always been central to my visual arts practice."

Other artists whose work emphasizes their place within communities defined by sexual identity include the photographers Loren Rex Cameron (b. 1951) (Figure 8.6) and Catherine Opie (b. 1961). Cameron's career as an artist began with the impulse to document the surgical transition from female to male: "I photographed myself and sent amateur snapshots to friends and family in order to show them how happy I was; I wanted them to get used to the idea of my body being different. If they could see my new beard and chest sans breasts, perhaps it would be easier for them to accept my new identity. You know, so they would stop calling me 'she.'" Cameron became an accomplished photographer known for powerful self-portraits. When Cameron published the 1996 book *Body Alchemy: Transsexual Portraits*, however, these self-portraits were contextualized with portraits of other female-to-male (FTM) transsexuals. This assertion of community does not deny the differences explicated in the accompanying text, which explores varying attitudes toward and decisions about the extent and nature of surgical interventions, but the book is dedicated "To the brave people in these photographs and for the thousands of people who are like them"—that is, to an ideal of community.

Figure 8.5. Del LaGrace Volcano, *Herm Self Portrait*. "It's becoming harder to tell what femininity and masculinity really are and who possesses them," Grace says, asserting that self-portraits allow for the expression of his/her "faggot self."

Opie, similarly, describes her "investment in the community" as central to her *Portraits* series of photographs (1993–1996) that documented gender-benders in Los Angeles (Figure 8.7). Basing her compositions on Renaissance aristocratic portraiture, Opie says, "I try to present people with an extreme amount of dignity.... I say that my friends are like my Royal Family." Opie juxtaposes this photographic series with others: the *Domestic* series (1995–1998), which depicts varieties of lesbian households ranging from couples with children to a punk-band commune; the *Minimall* series (1997–1998), which records the constantly changing "very fragile" collection of little stores with signage reflecting the various and shifting ethnic communities in Los Angeles; and the *Houses and Landscapes* series (1995–1996), which displays the street facades of houses in an upscale Los Angeles suburb. Challenging definitions of what might most conventionally be called a "community," Opie says of this residential suburb, "it's a quasi-community, but it's almost a negative, it's like not having a community. The architecture is completely about being individual.... The doors are always closed."

Figure 8.6. Loren Rex Cameron, *Cameron and Cameron* (2003). © Loren Cameron 2003. In this self-portrait Cameron appears with his sister, an MTF transsexual. Loren comments, "Our father lamented the loss of his only son when my sister Cameron changed her gender from male to female. He was astounded some years later when I transitioned from

Together all the artists in this section—and there are many others—exemplify the testing of identities, normative and non-normative, that, by the last decade of the twentieth century, was the hallmark of the term *queer*.

FRAGMENTATION FROM WITHIN

Although the challenge mounted by self-identified queers to normative sex and gender roles took aim at heterosexual privilege, its greatest impact was on the more fragile structures of identity associated with gay, and especially lesbian, identity. The divisions inherent in these so-called "lesbian sex wars" were—and often remain—deep. Del LaGrace Volcano characterized lesbian-feminist condemnation of her *Love Bites* photographs as a form of "lesbian puritanism" and complained that "SM dykes have been ostracized, labeled 'fascists' or pseudo-men." At the same time, feminist lesbians who came out of the political and cultural organizing of the 1970s were appalled by "queer" women's apparent desire to emulate the look and attitudes of men, especially when it came to eroticizing what feminists saw as masculine impulses toward sexual domination. The energy behind feminism's explosive growth in the previous decades now detonated within the movement, as women whose anger had animated attacks on patriarchy turned on one another.

Self-righteousness and anger polarized both sides of the debate, as some feminists asserted that any masculine impulse or act of sexual penetration was clear evidence of male identification and even will to rape, only to have their concerns dismissed as mindless "political correctness." Volcano, who had spent a youthful summer in California living with Barbara Hammer, a filmmaker who helped pioneer the lesbian-feminist art movements of the 1970s, now erased that episode from her autobi-

ography. These antagonisms are clear in some of the FTMs' statements printed in Cameron's *Body Alchemy*. One dismisses "all those years of living in the lesbian community and all the indoctrinated feminism of a certain type," and complains that, after his transition,

> When I've said, "Now I understand things like prostitution and pornography because my sex drive has gone up," I've received a lot of criticism. When I say, "I like being a man in relation to a woman because I like feeling stronger," I mean because I have more muscle mass now that I'm on testosterone. But I don't think any less of women for it!
>
> Guys all over the world are apologizing for being men and are trying to create a sense of equality with women. Some say this friction or war between the sexes is all a socialization thing. . . . But when you take hormones and change your biological sex, you realize it has to be more. There's something profoundly physical going on.

Such unqualified assertions of male prerogatives justified by biology restage debates from the early days of feminist activism, but now all the factions come (or came) from within the lesbian community. Lost in the controversy were opportunities for thoughtful engagement of important questions attending the development of feminist and lesbian identities: how to respond to diversity within these identities without denying historical and ideological continuities or forsaking the grounds for ethical, political, or aesthetic judgment.

Divisions among various feminist, lesbian, and queer identities were exacerbated by the debates around sexuality and gender in the broader culture. On one hand, some feminists who strongly opposed the sadomasochistic (mainly heterosexual) imagery that inspired artists like Volcano allied themselves with right-wing politicians who swept all homoerotic images into their condemnations of "pornography," lending credence to queers' fears of censorship and legal prosecution. On the other hand, older lesbian-feminist artists were dismayed by how eagerly the avant-garde art world, which had long ignored or belittled feminist imagery, welcomed young queer-identified artists who celebrated women performing masculinity. In 1997, for example, New York's Guggenheim Museum, which had never staged a feminist art exhibition, mounted a major show on "Gender Performance in Photography," including Opie's photographs. Curator Jennifer Blessing's catalog essay asserted Opie's avant-garde radicalism

Figure 8.7. (*Continued*) female to male, thereby regaining his only son."

Figure 8.7. Catherine Opie, *Justin Bond* (1993), chromogenic print. Reproduction courtesy of Regen Projects, Los Angeles. © Catherine Opie. Opie says of people who deviate from gender norms, "They're always going to be stared at, but I try to make them stare back."

by contrasting her work with mainstream film and television's supposed fascination with drag queens, asserting that in the popular culture, "femininity—the throwaway gender . . .—is available for play, while masculinity, which symbolizes power, cannot be tampered with." Such claims ignored important issues: Do Opie's photographs really "play" with masculinity or do they take it seriously? Do avant-garde accolades denied feminists, but accorded to women who look or act like men, reinforce associations of masculinity with power?

Figure 8.8. Nicole Eisenman, *Wonder Woman* (1996), ink on paper, Jack Tilton Gallery. This fanciful conjunction of Alice in Wonderland with the cartoon character Wonder Woman was publicized with an artist's statement that disavowed lesbian or feminist interpretations: "I have a problem with having my work seen primarily as feminist. I am a feminist, but in a way that I don't even

Harmony Hammond, who had welcomed the gender inclusiveness of "queer," blamed the art market for encouraging "queer art" with a "normalized and depoliticized 'queer look'" primarily useful for "giving heterosexuals the excitement of erotic taboo." Hammond is frustrated by the way a successful artist like Nicole Eisenman (b. 1965) "dismisses gender politics" (Figure 8.8). Despite the often-confrontational lesbian imagery of Eisenman's well-received drawings, the artist insists, "I was born to be an artist, not a female or lesbian artist." This assertion of artistic identity as inborn in a manner more essential than sex or sexual identity plays out as an affirmation of the avant-garde prioritizing of individualism over a "politics" associated with collectivity. Her gallery's website promotion of Eisenman's 1996 exhibition opens with this statement from the artist: "What I value in other people's art and my own is imagination and personal things. Politics just seems to me to be mean-spirited and trendy. I don't see myself as being in a combative stance." The prominence accorded Eisenman's statements in this art-world context seems to confirm Hammond's suspicion that the rise of "lesbian chic" in the art world and mainstream media was part of a "depoliticizing," "antifeminist backlash not directed at essentialism" (as was often claimed), but specifically "at revolutionary ideals of change and solidarity with others." At the very least, it seems clear that the collapse of ideals of "lesbian" political solidarity in favor of "queer"

fragmentation was abetted by the avant-garde's powerful investment in individualism.

Figure 8.8. (*Continued*) think about. It seems like second nature. I think we're all feminists by now. We know it's right. But I'm not making 'feminist art' any more than I'm doing 'lesbian art.'"

PRESSURE FROM WITHOUT

The way the art world at the end of the twentieth century dismissed gay and lesbian identity as manifestations of group conformity reversed dynamics powerful since the previous turn of the century, when (as discussed in chapters 3 and 4) references to homosexuality were often used to signal avant-garde individualism. Such profound shifts in the relationship between concepts of art and homosexuality were part of the changing paradigms outlined at the start of this chapter, but powerful social forces beyond the art world also contributed to the fragmentation of minority sexual identities in the era of *queer*. By the dawn of the new millennium, the most visible initiatives related to minority sexual identity were divided—often bitterly—between campaigns to claim the status of marriage for same-sex couples on one hand, and radical challenges to conventions of gender and sexuality by sexual reassignment surgery on the other. In another conceptual reversal that marked the new turn of the century, these apparently divergent initiatives shared a common reliance on the authoritative institutions that for most of the twentieth century were viciously antagonistic to "gay" and "lesbian" identity: church and state for the proponents of marriage, scientists and doctors in the case of transsexuals. Like the influence of the art market on depoliticizing artists, the presence of, or hope for, such powerful allies turned sexual minorities away from one another.

The dynamics that divided minority sexual identities from each other and from the identity of "artist" during the 1990s, moreover, cannot be separated from the right-wing political resurgence that began the decade before (as discussed in relation to AIDS in the previous chapter). By 1999, right-wing attacks on artists and art institutions that seemed to speak as or for sexual minorities led to what a former Museum of Modern Art administrator described as "a chilling effect: an elimination of funding in categories where trouble might arise, an easing away from controversy by arts presenters and sponsors, and perhaps even a shifting away from 'problematic' subject matter by artists themselves." In Britain, a spokesman for the National Council of Civil Liberties assessed the impact of Clause 28, not in terms of actual prosecutions of local governments, but in terms of "self-censorship, the decisions taken by councils behind closed doors." In one episode of self-censorship that became public, London's prestigious Hayward Gallery in 1996 removed two photographs from a Mapplethorpe exhibition, saying it had consulted the local police, who gave them the legally meaningless advice to "carefully consider" displaying such art. As artists and art institutions retreated from controversial art, prominent critics shifted from endorsing to reproving activist art. The New York critic Peter Schjeldahl, for instance,

who during the 1980s had praised the "authentic rebelliousness" of feminist and "minority group" artists, now dismissed the same decade as "the era of politically rhetorical postmodernism" and as a time of "gifted artists doing their best under a foreign occupation by political imperatives." In contrast, he praised the "personality-intensive" art of Nicole Eisenman with her "sensibility saturated, to the point of nonchalance, with image culture and sexual politics."

Schjeldahl typifies the shifting critical perspectives that were clear in the overwhelmingly hostile critical reaction to the 1993 Biennial Exhibition at New York's Whitney Museum. Since 1918, this recurring exhibition has been a prestigious avant-garde venue. In 1993, the curators, noting that issues of "identity and community" were a pressing concern of contemporary artists and, not incidentally, looking beyond the most prestigious commercial galleries for artists, flouted the individualist premises of the avant-garde by choosing art about collective identities based on class, race, sexuality, and gender. Much of this art addressed the intertwined history of sexual identity and the avant-garde. Nan Goldin displayed photographs of her gender-bending community of friends, including the late David Wojnarowicz. Performance artist John Kelly (b. 1954) based a piece on a 1926 essay by Jean Cocteau about a cross-dressing trapeze artist. *Nitrate Kisses*, a film by Barbara Hammer (b. 1939), interspersed voyeuristic footage from a 1933 film titled *Lot in Sodom* with images from her own community of loving lesbians. *Rock Hudson's Home Movies*, a video by Mark Rappaport (b. 1942), addressed the closeted life of the film star whose death had occasioned so much hysteria about AIDS. Donald Moffett (b. 1955), one of the core members of ACT UP's Gran Fury, exhibited sculptural constructions of bedsheets evoking the sites of sex along with drawings from his "Gays in the Military" series. Robert Gober (b. 1954), whose installations had long addressed issues of bodily degradation and emotional loss associated with AIDS, carefully constructed what looked like 120 piles of old newspapers that collaged real news stories about the deteriorating environment, collapsing social programs, and homophobia with invented advertisements for real stores, one featuring himself modeling a wedding dress he had sewn (Figure 8.9). Jumbling together news stories with what seem to be private fantasy images, Gober's installation registered the bewilderment of gay men thrown into the headlines by AIDS and the right-wing backlash against homosexuals. His presentation of the work as yesterday's news, ready to be collected and pulped, invoked complex feelings: resignation that so much tragedy can be absorbed into a larger order, and anger at the waste of lives, emotions, and natural resources. The "leitmotif" of Gober's newspapers, explained the exhibition's head curator, was "the ongoing debate over the body and sexuality that has been at the center of our cultural struggles." She singled out Gober's work as "paradigmatic of the 1990s" for the way the jostling demands of various identities "produce a

Figure 8.9. Robert Gober, *Newspaper* (1992), photolithography on archival (Mohawk Super Fine) paper, twine. Photo credit: Adam Reich, courtesy of the artist. © Robert Gober.

decentered whole that may have to be described as a community of communities."

Such emphasis on community had been, for feminists like Lucy Lippard, what made postmodernism more than just another individualistic modernist style, and the outpouring of feminist and AIDS-oriented activist art and theory during the 1980s made such a paradigm shift seem plausible. But the prospect that ideals of collective activism might, in as prestigious a forum as the Whitney Biennial, supersede the avant-garde's organization around ideals of individual self-expression performed for the pleasure of individual viewers provoked a powerful backlash. Art critics reacted with, in the curator's words, "a maelstrom of negative criticism." Roger Kimball in the *National Review* began by saying that the Whitney should be burned down and concluded by proposing that it be demolished. In between, after waxing nostalgic for Clement Greenberg's era, the review complained that a "semi-literate display of psychopathology and radical sloganeering" substituted "political rage" for "beauty or craftsmanship or formal excellence."

These sentiments in a right-wing magazine were less surprising than the way critics who had earlier defended politically engaged art now attacked not just this show, but the idea of identity-oriented art. Schjeldahl's review in the left-wing *Village Voice* was titled "Missing: The Pleasure Principle"; it complained that, with "small exceptions in the work of artists not entirely weaned from formal bliss," the artists on display were "carrying torches for aggrieved communities, and otherwise politicking." *October* magazine, which had pioneered avant-garde attention to AIDS imagery in the 1980s, now announced that its editorial board, spoken for by Hal Foster, was provoked by the Biennial to address new "problems that appear to confront art, theory, and politics." These

"problems," Foster said, reflected a misplaced concern with what art might be about—the "politics of the signified," as he put it, as opposed to the "materials" and "forms" of art. Although Foster asserted a distinction between *October* and the "many reactive detractors" of the Biennial, the board's critique was not much different from complaints that "political rage" had usurped "beauty or craftsmanship or formal excellence." Where right-wing critics claimed to defend "aesthetic excellence," *October*'s critics fell back on dogmas of avant-garde individualism to resist the idea that art might speak for a collective identity.

The lengthy published discussion by *October*'s editorial board exemplifies how the avant-garde's spokesmen (and two women) scrambled to realign themselves in relation to issues of art, politics, and identity in the 1990s. Condemning as "potentially racist" the Biennial curators' selection of diverse artists to speak for and about minority identity, the all-white *October* board summoned a nonwhite graduate student to testify that, although she did not know any artists in the Biennial, she did "personally know" "artists of color" and "artists involved with issues of sexuality" who felt forced by curators to make art about those issues, although she qualified this with: "I don't project it on curators alone. I think the artists have internalized it too." The avant-garde backlash against the Biennial thus claimed to protect artists' individualism not only from community-minded curators, but from community-minded impulses within the artists themselves. That no one in this high-powered board acknowledged the illogic of this position—not to mention the hypocrisy of tokenizing a single young woman of color as the voice of minority artists in order to critique an exhibition for using minority artists to speak for and from their identities—suggests the blinding power of the imperative to defend the modernist equation of the avant-garde with individualism. The stakes for critics were frankly articulated in the *October* board's discussion by Foster: "Over the last few years I have seen a sometimes phobic reaction to multiculturalism on the part of artists and writers involved in critical theory" who realized that, when criteria of artistic worth return to issues of identity or social relevance, "no one seems to care anymore about our priestly expertise in the mysteries of the signifier. And, to add insult to injury, these 'returns' have captured our avant-garde! . . . I feel it sometimes too." As Foster candidly revealed here, art practices associated with community and identity profoundly threatened an avant-garde accustomed to speaking a language of "critical theory" that—although stimulated by breaking taboos—does not risk association with political or social movements that mobilize more than symbolic challenges to authority.

The avant-garde's backlash offered museums and galleries already anxious to avoid controversy a rationale to drop issue-oriented art in favor of a "pluralistic" fragmentation of individual styles and sensibilities that indulged many of the traditional modes of avant-garde provocation.

Dave Hickey, a former art dealer who rose to fame as a critic and curator in the 1990s, exemplifies this brashness. Hickey defends his focus on beauty by lashing out at those who care about "meaning." Although his small book, subtitled "Essays on Beauty," made a splash in 1993 by comparing Mapplethorpe's most controversial sexual images to Shakespeare's sonnets, Hickey's own curatorial choices avoided contentious social issues in favor of rich colors, sleek forms, and shiny surfaces. Hickey's exuberant, if incoherent, iconoclasm offers the appearance of controversy (his writings and interviews invariably rehearse his contempt for "arts professionals" and repeat stories about how angry he makes people), without commitment to any ideology beyond the value of taking pleasure in beauty, a pleasure he compares to "brushing up against a girl with big boobs in the subway."

Hickey's promotion of beauty clearly reacts against critics like Douglas Crimp and Jan Zita Grover, who (as discussed in chapter 7) were provoked by the issues of representation raised by the AIDS crisis to reject modernist investments in (to quote Grover) "formalist play and analysis" in favor of an interest in "human collectivity" that they associated with postmodernism. Looking back in 2009, Hickey exulted, "twenty years ago I was regarded as a total hedonist, now I'm seen as an intellectual." His tone contrasts with Hal Foster's lament over the end of the "age of the critic"—Hickey provocatively attributes his success to the fact that "there are no influential midcareer critics today" because "a whole generation of critics died of AIDS in the '80s . . . those dead guys from the '80s should be writing most of what I am writing now, and I should be left to play blackjack." But the basic point is the same: following the cataclysm associated with AIDS and art in the 1990s, art criticism now stakes its diminishing influence on a return to ideas of an avant-garde defined by performances of individualism, and therefore inimical to subcultural activism, especially that associated with the sexual and racial identities that were stigmatized by AIDS. The shift in critical priorities was celebrated by Schjeldahl in 1996, when he announced, in the title of a piece in the *New York Times,* "Beauty Is Back: A Trampled Esthetic Blooms Again," or, as he put it more concisely elsewhere, "nice art rules."

So where does this leave us? The most basic lesson of the history sketched in this book is that definitions of art and homosexuality are multiple and constantly evolving. If during the modernist era they were fundamentally linked, it seems that the twenty-first century may see them drift apart once again. To some extent, this reconfiguration of art and homosexuality around myriad forms of individualistic expression represents a liberation from expectations for both artists and homosexuals. And to some extent, this reconfiguration represents a real loss. Valorization of a free-for-all of performative individualism—whether in television advertising, movie plots, or museum exhibitions—often defaults to reiterations of convention, with everyone

performing individualism in more or less the same way. Conventions tend to reproduce existing hierarchies. The effect in art criticism is that the critics who seem most authoritative are those whose ideals for art mirror social authority. Hickey's frequent allusions to his pleasure in "boobs" is an obvious example of the way aesthetic pleasure is universalized in the image of conventional hierarchies of gender and sexuality. Much of the most commercially successful contemporary art is made to gratify this taste. At the same time, the history of postmodernism is being rewritten in ways that obscure or minimize impulses of dissent. The power of the art market in this process may be clearest in the way that some of the commercial galleries that represent the estates of artists who addressed AIDS directly in their lives and in their art deal with this work. In some cases, these galleries have created catalogs of these artists' work that exclude AIDS-related projects or used their control of copyright of the artists' work to discourage publications that address the context of AIDS, attempting to redirect analysis of the art to focus on issues such as linguistic theory or the heritage of minimalism, which have not been stigmatized by association with any minority group. As these nonstigmatized issues become critical priorities, they are reflected in the ways exhibitions are organized, art history is taught, and the artists, critics, and art historians of the future are trained. As art cedes its critical stance toward conventional hierarchies, it loses the potential to change our ways of seeing—and being—in the world. When criticism denies the potential for pleasure in art that speaks for or about subcultural identifications, whether as subject matter or sensibility (or both), a portion of human experience disappears from the range of acceptable—even conceivable—aesthetic practices carried out in the present or perceived in the past. This range, of course, is exactly what this book has traced as a crucial—and, I insist, pleasurable—part of the history of modernism.

As a gesture of resistance against such foreclosure, therefore, this chapter (and book) concludes by offering a final case study in the potential for beauty, pleasure, and insight at the intersection of art making, art history, homoeroticism, and community.

WORKING THROUGH DIFFERENCE: THE BLACK MALE NUDE

Although in the 1920s the Harlem Renaissance contributed substantially to new ideas about both art and sexuality (as discussed in chapter 4), the construction of the avant-garde in the image of American (by which was assumed white) masculinity after World War II precluded significant articulations of either racial- or sexual-minority identity in art, let alone investigation of their intersection. Even when such work existed, it was ignored. For instance, when the performance artist Adrian Piper (b. 1948), a light-skinned black woman, first cross-dressed as a black

man in 1973, her initial accounts of the experience stressed its sexual implications (Figure 8.10). "My sexual attraction to women flows more freely, uninhibited by my fear of their rejection in case my feelings should show in my face," she wrote, noting also, "My sexual attraction to men is complicated and altered by my masculine appearance. . . . I instinctively suppress expression of my sexual feelings for fear of alienating the comparatively tenuous feelings of kinship with men I now have." Subsequent analysis of this well-known piece, however, ignores these sexual issues. Accepting her summary, made many years later, that "people reacted to me as though I were a black male, and that's incredibly unpleasant," histories of the period regularly interpret Piper's performance as about racism experienced by black men—this despite the fact that photo documentation of Piper's "Mythic Being" shows crowds smiling at this tiny figure in an extravagant Afro wig and obviously stuck-on mustache who wanders the street chanting portions of adolescent diary entries: "No matter how much I ask my mother to stop buying crackers, cookies, and things, she does anyway, and says it's for her, even if I always eat them. So I've decided to fast." As part of the project, Piper also took out small ads in the *Village Voice* showing the face of the Mythic Being with thought bubbles, including the diary passage just quoted and "Today was the first day of school. The only decent boys in my class are Robbie and Clyde. I think I like Clyde." The erasure—abetted by the artist, as she became well established—of the "joy and confusion" she initially found in these outrageous drag performances has precluded analysis of the role that play with androgyny and sexual identity had in creating the responses of her impromptu audiences on the streets and trains of New York and Boston. Despite the visual evidence, the idea that these audiences perceived her as someone in drag—racial, gendered, or both—became unthinkable in a critical context in which, if the piece was about race, it could not be about sexuality.

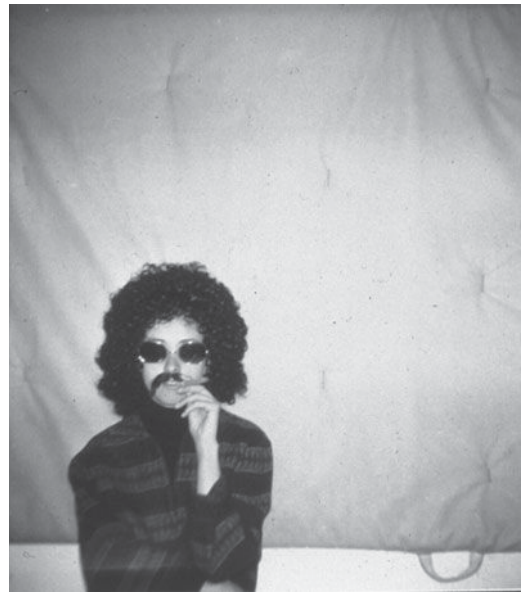


Figure 8.10 Adrian Piper, *Mythic Being (thought bubble with no words)* (1974). © Adrian Piper Research Archive, Berlin. Piper published this photograph with various thought bubbles among the small advertisements in the *Village Voice*.

A similar either/or mentality conditioned initial responses to Robert Mapplethorpe's photographs of black male nudes when they were first exhibited in the early 1980s. In a culture that casts blackness and homosexuality as separate identities, homoerotic pictures of black men were invariably seen as imposing a gay white artist's sensibility on black bodies. The British scholar Kobena Mercer, in an essay titled "Imaging the Black Man's Sex," offered an early and articulate version of this critique. Responding to a 1983 exhibition of Mapplethorpe's work at the Institute of Contemporary Arts in London, Mercer's much-cited essay argued that Mapplethorpe imposed on black men aesthetic conventions developed

for the female nude, thus transferring "erotic investment in the fantasy of mastery from gender to racial difference" (Figure 8.11). Mercer contrasted these nudes to the sadomasochistic imagery that (as discussed in chapter 6) made Mapplethorpe famous: "Whereas the photographs of gay male S/M rituals invoke a subcultural sexuality that consists of *doing* something, black men are confined and defined in their very *being* as sexual and nothing but sexual, hence hypersexual." Mapplethorpe's habitual posing of his black models as isolated figures, Mercer said, was a form of "erotic objectification" that "forecloses the possible representation of a collective or contextualized black male body." Mercer's argument, informed by recent feminist theory and published in 1986, was cast in terms of competing identity politics: Mapplethorpe was a white man using a visual vocabulary developed by whites to indulge overwhelmingly white art-world audiences with art that denied the collectivity or context of black identity.

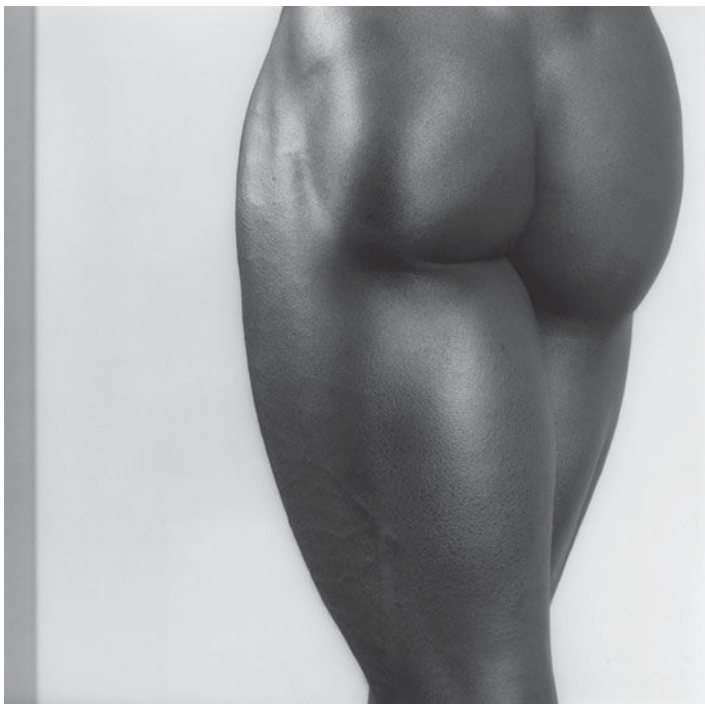


Figure 8.11. Robert Mapplethorpe, *Derrick Cross* (1982–83). © Robert Mapplethorpe Foundation. Used by permission. Kobena Mercer first interpreted this image as objectifying the model by segmenting his body so it resembles a sculpture, but later reinterpreted Mapplethorpe's "tactical use of homoeroticism" as illuminating racial, gendered, and sexual hierarchies denied by conventions of the artistic nude.

By 1989, Mercer was anxious to revise his argument, not because it was entirely wrong, but to emphasize "ambivalence" within art, its audiences, and even within individual viewers, including himself: "I still cannot make up my mind about Mapplethorpe," he began. What had happened to trouble his earlier analysis, Mercer explained, were the controversies over art and homoeroticism whipped up by right-wing politicians, which "irrevocably altered the context in which we perceive, evaluate and argue about the aesthetic and political value of Mapplethorpe's photographs." In this context, Mercer wanted to avoid a precedent he saw in how feminism had fragmented under pressure: "despite their emancipatory objectives, certain arguments about representation initially put forward in the radical feminist antipornography movement have been taken up and translated in the coercive cultural-political agenda of the neoconservative Right," he wrote; "I do *not* want a black gay critique to be appropriated to the purposes of the New Right's political agenda."

Against claims that art falls into fixed categories—black, gay, pornographic, unpatriotic, etc.—Mercer's assertion of "ambivalence" stresses the multiplicity of interpretations that weave in and around viewers' identities. One viewer knowledgeable about the Harlem Renaissance

might compare Mapplethorpe to Carl Van Vechten (discussed in chapter 4), for instance, while another viewer familiar with gay video pornography might recognize one of Mapplethorpe's models, affirming "a source of intertextual pleasure to those 'in the know,'" as Mercer put it. Mercer came to value the way Mapplethorpe's photographs reward viewers whose frames of reference lie outside conventional art history and heteronormative identity: "circulating imagery between museums and the streets, Mapplethorpe's strategy of promiscuous intertextuality expresses a campy or kitschy sense of humor that might otherwise escape the sensibilities of his nongay or antigay viewers." Recognizing "the historical specificity of Mapplethorpe's practice as a contemporary gay artist," Mercer now read the formal elegance of his photographs as "aesthetic irony" or "artistic *perversion*" that challenged conventional hierarchies of both art and race. His earlier argument that Mapplethorpe's formal strategies exerted "mastery" over his models, furthermore, was challenged by the testimony of models who claimed the photographer made them feel attractive, sometimes for the first time. One said, "It's almost as if he wants to give a gift to this particular group. He wants to create something very beautiful and give it to them." Mercer's recognition that these photographs might be seen as the products of "intersubjective collaboration between artist and model" was related to his own ambivalent identification with Mapplethorpe as someone who shared in "urban gay male culture, as one of many countercultures of modernity." Mercer's embrace of ambivalence in interpreting Mapplethorpe's art challenged the oversimplifications of right-wing demagoguery and, by extending respectful attention to the opinions and experiences of other gay men (including the artist and his models), resisted the tendency of subcultural identity to fragment under political and social pressure.

Mercer's affirmation of the possibility of diversity within identity led him to combine his reexamination of Mapplethorpe with analyses of black writers and of the photographer Rotimi Fani-Kayode (1955–89). As a Nigerian-born, American-schooled, British-based gay artist who collaborated with a white partner, Fani-Kayode personified a complex overlapping of identities: "On three counts I am an outsider: in matters of sexuality; in terms of geographical and cultural dislocation; and in the sense of not having become the sort of respectably married professional my parents might have hoped for. Such a position gives me a feeling of having very little to lose." His attitude is reflected in his photographs, which combine African and European elements with an elegance that rivals Mapplethorpe. For Mercer, Fani-Kayode's images differ from Mapplethorpe's in that his figures are more often "coupled and contextualized." Even his static poses of single figures, which are most similar to Mapplethorpe's, use props that invite social interpretation of the bodies, the images, and the act of seeing them (Figure 8.12).

The American artist Glenn Ligon (b. 1960) also engaged the issues explored in Mercer's writing. Ligon's contribution to the controversial

Figure 8.12. Rotimi Fani-Kayode, *Nothing to Lose IX* (1989), from the *Bodies of Experience* series. © Rotimi Fani-Kayode/ Autograph ABP. The juxtaposition of African mask and the leather-man harness thematizes the artist's overlapping identities.

1993 Whitney Biennial was an installation titled *Notes on the Margin of the "Black Book,"* a reference to Mapplethorpe's 1986 book of photographs of black male nudes (Figure 8.13). For this work, Ligon disassembled a copy of Mapplethorpe's book and displayed the framed images with cards bearing quotations that reflect a wide range of perspectives. In an early version of the installation, a card with Ligon's statement, "Mapplethorpe's relation to Warhol includes an ability to mirror the desire and prejudices of his spectators, to make them see what they do not want to see," was next to a quotation from news coverage of the controversy over the *Perfect Moment* exhibition, "People looking at these kind of pictures become addicts and spread AIDS," and above one reading

Figure 8.13. Glenn Ligon, *Notes on the Margin of the "Black Book"* (1991–93), installation of offset prints and text, Solomon R. Guggenheim Museum, New York, gift of the Bohen Foundation, 2001. Photograph by Ellen Labenski, © The Solomon R. Guggenheim Foundation, New York.

simply, "My lover." At the Whitney, all the cards were quotations from experts on race and/or representation, including extracts from Mercer's essays on Mapplethorpe. *Notes on the Margin of the "Black Book,"* in its Whitney version, embraced the outraged voice of poet Essex Hemphill complaining, "What is insulting and endangering to Black men is Mapplethorpe's *conscious* determination that the faces, the heads, and by extension, the minds and experiences of some of his Black subjects are not as important as close up shots of their cocks." At the same time, Ligon also allowed for—indeed, he acknowledges that the success of this piece depends on—the audience's recognition of the photographs' beauty and erotic appeal. Most importantly, the installation balanced Hemphill's critique by demonstrating the power of Ligon's own "mind and experience" as a black artist to articulate a black gay identity, not against or oblivious to the interlocked history of art and homosexuality, but in ambivalent relationship to this precedent. Rejecting the tendencies that fragmented sexual identity in the 1990s, Ligon did not assert an essentialized notion of racial identity to cut himself off from the history of gay art. Instead, the provocations and contradictions engaged by *Notes on the Margin of the "Black Book"* perform an expansion of gay identity to include black men occupying a diversity of positions: seen and seeing, erotic and intellectual, inspired and outraged. Unsettling notions of fixed identity that insist on attaching particular attitudes to particular races or sexual orientations, Ligon's work takes its place among the most thoughtful manifestations of "queer" sensibility, provoking viewers to recognize their own attitudes as performances that may change in different situations.

Notes on the Margin of the "Black Book" was Ligon's first work to address his identity as a gay man; he had made a name for himself in the 1980s

with artwork focused on race. By the early 1990s, however, Ligon could join a growing movement, including British filmmaker Isaac Julien (b.1960) and American photographer and performance artist Lyle Ashton Harris (b. 1965), whose art destabilizes racial and sexual identities in relation to one another. Both Ligon and Harris have created scrapbooks that juxtapose family photographs with erotic snapshots. Ligon's album, created between 1994 and 1998, took its title, *A Feast of Scraps*, from his fond description of the source of the old erotic pictures: a vintage pornography store that, until it was harassed out of business during a wave of gentrification, was a landmark in a Manhattan gay neighborhood. Links between manifestations of gay community, relationships based on race, and biological family ties are suggested in the typed captions interspersed among the photographs, in which terms like *Mother, Daddy, Brother,* and *baby* refer ambiguously to both biological relationships and those based on racial or sexual identity. Harris's installations *The Good Life* (1994) and *Drag Racing* (1997) similarly collage family photographs and autobiographical texts about childhood with erotic snapshots and images culled from the Harlem Renaissance and contemporary advertising. For both Ligon and Harris, such collages evoke the way identity is constructed and performed in relation to a history of images.

Figure 8.14. Lyle Ashton Harris in collaboration with Thomas Allen Harris, *Brotherhood, Crossroads, etc. # 1* (1994), part of a unique Polaroid triptych (61 x 50.8 cm), Jack Tilton Gallery, NY. The Harris brothers echo the

Like Ligon, Harris is keenly aware of the intertwined history of art and identity. His diverse body of photography addresses the construction of both racial and sexual identity through historical reference as diverse as the eighteenth century's languorous Anacreontic nudes (discussed in chapter 2) (Figure 8.14), the fighting, howling men painted by Francis Bacon, Fani-Kayode's fantastic imagery, and, of course, Mapplethorpe's photographs of black male nudes. "Often we like to hold on to dichotomies of black-white, straight-gay, male-female," Harris says; "What I'm trying to do is document the different identities pulling on me from within and from

without. It's not about fitting into any camp but about the space that exists in between."

Artists like Ligon and Harris realize that there are alternatives between the extremes of a free-floating avant-garde individualism responsible to no one but oneself (paradoxically performed through conformity to the norms of middle-class masculinity) and essentialized notions of minority identity so rigid and totalizing that all the members of a subcultural group are imagined to be exactly the same. As the epigraph for this chapter indicates, admiring accomplishments in the present makes a risky basis for optimistic predictions about the future. But we may hope for more art that opens up potentials for the thoughtful interplay among identities, both within and between individuals. Rather than predict the future, therefore, it will be enough to conclude that, if there is a lesson to be learned from the history of the relationship between art and homosexuality sketched in this book, it is that definitions are both dependent and dynamic. Definitions—and identity is fundamentally a definition of self—change as their social and representational contexts change. No one is completely exempt from, or completely trapped in, prevailing notions of art or identity. To be aware of—and not threatened by—the variability of these concepts frees us to choose, and perhaps change, our position(s) in relation to them. To understand their historical evolution to date, however, grounds those choices by linking us to legacies from the past and communities in the present that can inspire and sustain us in those choices.

Figure 8.14. (*Continued*) poses of collapsing hero-lovers in eighteenth-century French painting. Their mixture of violence and love in the series from which this image is taken addresses, says Lyle Harris, how black men "are conditioned to kill that which we love and that which mirrors us—ourselves" and criticizes "black nationalism and diasporic black culture for their acculturated prohibitions on same sex desire."

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INTRODUCTION

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Kurt Vonnegut is quoted from *Time Quake* (New York: G. P. Putnam's, 1997), 37.
Foucault is quoted from *The History of Sexuality*, 43; Halperin from *One Hundred Years of Homosexuality,* 17, and *How to Do the History of Homosexuality,* 3–4; Weeks from *Against Nature*, 15.
The scheme of conceptual forms of homosexuality outlined in the matrix combines categories from two very useful historical surveys of homosexuality: Greenberg's *The Construction of Homosexuality* (see chapter 2) and the introduction to Duberman, Vicinus, and Chauncey, *Hidden from History*.

CHAPTER 1

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The translation of the Roman gemstone inscription is quoted from Clarke, 40.

POLYNESIA

Eisenman is quoted from 103. On the ongoing obfuscation of controversial issues about sex and gender in exhibitions on Gauguin, see Abigail Solomon-Godeau, "Going Native," *Art in America* 77 (July 1989), 118–29; and Laura Morowitz, "A Paradise Closer to Home: Gauguin, Le Pouldu, and the Search for Nirvana," *Oxford Art Journal* 27.1 (2004), 117–20.

NATIVE AMERICA

Catlin is quoted from 2:215; Marquette is quoted from Katz, 287. Additional information concerning Navajo practices was generously provided by Wendy Weston, Director of American Indian Relations at the Heard Museum. On the persistence of gender-transcendent identities among native North Americans, see Feinberg, 26–29, and Roscoe, *Living the Spirit*.

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On Basil I, see Boswell, *Same-Sex Unions*, 231–41. On female-headed serpents, see Camille, 59–60, 90–91. On the church at Châteaumeillant, see Anthony Weir and James Jerman, *Images of Lust: Sexual Carvings on Medieval Churches* (London: B. T. Batsford, 1986), 84–85. On the Knights Templar, see Crompton, 192–96.

THE RENAISSANCE

Cellini is quoted in Saslow, *Ganymede in the Renaissance*, 150. Symonds is quoted from 2:86–87. The analysis of the civic purposes of David iconography comes from Christopher Fulton, "The Boy Stripped Bare." The dialog given to Leonardo is quoted in Crompton, 267–68. The claim that the *Mona Lisa* is a self-portrait is in Lillian Schwartz, "Leonardo's Mona Lisa," *Art & Antiques* (January 1987), 50–54. Michelangelo's and Cavalieri's correspondence is quoted and discussed in Saslow, *Ganymede*, 17–18, 48–50. The example of psychologizing Michelangelo's *Doni Tondo* is quoted from Cooper, *The Sexual Perspective* (cited in the introduction), 12. The quotation about Carravaggio's use of Michelangelo is from Saslow, "Homosexuality in the Renaissance," 102. The *Satyra Sotadica*, originally published around 1660 in Lyon, was by 1739 known to have been written by Nicolas Chorier and numerous later editions appeared under his name, although they retained *The Dialogues of Luisa Sigea* as part of the title; the first French translation was titled *L'Academie des Dames*, the first English title was *Tullia and Octavia*. Johann Weyer's 1563 treatise on witchcraft is quoted from Simons, 93. The implications of Hans Baldung Grien's 1514 drawing captioned "DER COR CAPEN, EIN GUT JAR" are debated by scholars; compare Sullivan, 376, and Weigert 29–30.

SEVENTEENTH- AND EIGHTEENTH-CENTURY EUROPE

Foucault's late repositioning of the invention of homosexuality to the early eighteenth century is cited in Didier Eribon, *Michel Foucault* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1991), 316. Ludovico Sinitrari's 1700 text addressing sodomy among women is quoted from Traub, *The Renaissance of Lesbianism*, 211. Winckelmann's *History of the Art of Antiquity* is quoted from its preface; period sources concerning Winckelmann are quoted from Potts, *Flesh and the Ideal*, 209, 212. Dutch juridical commentary is quoted from Boon, 246. The quotation and analysis of *Pamela Censured* is from Donoghue, *Passions Between Women,* 185–86; the term *cast* is used in a similar way related to men in a 1757 text analyzed by Elfenbein (9–12). Girodet is quoted in Crow, *Emulation,* 134.

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IMAGERY AT MID-CENTURY

The analysis of the Hirschfeld cartoon is drawn from Steakley. The discussion of Ingres draws from Marilyn R. Brown, "The Harem Dehistoricized: Ingres' *Turkish Bath*," *Arts* 61 (Summer 1987), 58–68, which includes the 1868 quotation from Gautier and the 1905 denial of lesbian embrace; my thanks to Sarah Betzer and Sheila Crane for pointing out the vignette of the women in the background.

INVENTING THE "AVANT-GARDE"

Elfenbein [cited in chapter 2] is quoted from 13–14. On Baudelaire's resistance to military metaphors, see Lamoureux, 192. T. J. Clark's *Image of the People: Gustave Courbet and the Second French Republic, 1848–1851* (London: Thames and Hudson, 1973) uses the term *Bohemian* to distinguish Courbet's originality from what became the formulaic "institutionalized . . . initiation rite" of the "avant-garde" (14), but critics in the nineteenth century and since have used these terms interchangeably—often with opposite inference that the "avant-garde" was truly political while the "Bohemians" were merely romantic posers. Clark's conflation of Courbet's aesthetic and political radicalism has been critiqued as itself a "romanticizing formula" (Gerald Raunig, *Art and Revolution: Transversal Activism in the Long Twentieth Century*, trans. Aileeen Derieg [Los Angeles: Semiotexte: 2007], 97). Williams's argument is echoed by Thomas Crow's conclusion that "the avant-garde serves as a kind of research and development arm of the culture industry" (*Modern Art in the Common Culture* [New Haven: Yale, 1996], 35); Crow's celebratory presentation of this dynamic's salutary effect for "the avant-garde, the bearer of modernism" (37) does not pretend to assess its effect on the cultures or subcultures from which the avant-garde draws inspiration. On Khalil Bey, see Francis Haskell, "A Turk and His Pictures in Nineteenth-Century Paris," *Oxford Art Journal* 5.1 (Spring 1982), 40–47, from which the journalist is quoted (41).

ARTISTS AT MID-CENTURY

Symonds's memoir is qoted from 29–30. His *Life of Michelangelo Buonarroti* [cited in chapter 2] is quoted from 2:384–85. Whitman's disappearance even from humanistic conceptions of gay identity was noted in 1973 by pioneering activist and publisher Jack Nichols in "Walt Whitman: Poet of Comrades and Love," in *Historic Speeches and Rhetoric for Gay and Lesbian Rights* (1892–2000), ed. Robert B. Ridinger (New York: Haworth, 2004), 193.

The posthumous reminiscences and assessments of Leighton are quoted from Stephenson, 224, 237. Leonée and Richard Ormond's *Lord Leighton* concludes that "Leighton was attracted to the young and very young of both sexes, and that in them he found a fulfillment as much emotional as purely sexual."

Quotations from literary works invoking Moreau are my translations from *Gustave Moreau par ses contemporains*, ed. Frédéric Chaleil (Paris: Editions de Paris, 1998). On Moreau's house-museum, see Pierre-Louis Mathieu and Geneviève Lacambre, *The Gustave Moreau Museum* (Paris: Réunion des musées nationaux, 1997).

Henry James's characterization of women artists in Rome, along with Story's description of them as a "harem (scarem)," appears in his *William Wetmore Story and His Friends: From Letters, Diaries, and Memoirs* (New York: Houghton Mifflin, 1903), 254, 257. Assessments of Harriet Hosmer by Hawthorne and Leighton are quoted from Cooper, *The Sexual Perspective* (cited in the introduction), 56. Hosmer is quoted in Merrill, 176. Her ideas of Zenobia, originally published in a letter to the *Boston Transcript* (February 2, 1865), are in Carr. Child is quoted in Waller, 25; for more on Hosmer's *Zenobia*, see Cherry, 101–141. Cronin is quoted from *Harriet Hosmer Lost and Found*, 6.

Rosa Bonheur is quoted from Klumpke, 358. Saslow is quoted from "'Disagreeably Hidden,'" 190; Hirschfeld's journal from Saslow, 200.

THE MODERN ARTIST AS HOMOSEXUAL

The transcript of the Wilde trials was published in the Notable British Trials Series as *The Trials of Oscar Wilde* (London: William Hodge, 1948). For an analysis of the political and cultural background, see David, 3–27. Period sources are quoted from Nordau, 557; Ellis and Symonds, 212. Symonds's letter to his daughter is quoted from Grosskurth, 271. The *Daily Telegraph* is quoted from Gagnier, 145. My argument that the Wilde trials mark a crucial episode in the depoliticization of the avant-garde is informed by Poggioli, who chronicles the nineteenth-century avant-garde as losing its original political impetus after 1880. Hadjinicolaou dates the consolidation of the artistic avant-garde to just before World War I (43), noting that its "apolitical tendency . . . has the greatest number of followers and has predominated since the Second World War" (45).

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The quotation and citation of *The Artist* as the first published use of *boyfriend* is in Bartlett, 110. Wilhelm von Gloeden is quoted from Aldrich, 146, and Goldman, 239.

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ECHOES OF AESTHETICISM

Day published von Gloeden's photographs in "Photography Applied to the Undraped Figure" and in two articles in *Camera Notes*, both titled "Art and the Camera," in October 1897 and July 1898. An account of Gibran's secular crucifixion is in Gibran, 17–18. Analyses of the contexts for Day's crucifixion scenes are taken from Jussim, 123–24; Fanning, 103–04, who quotes Jackson Lears on "secularized religiosity"; and Shand-Tucci, 40, who makes the claim for Day's sadomasochism. Day's claim for the authenticity of his crucifixion images is quoted in Jussim, 123. Hostile British reviews are quoted from Jussim, 91, 133.

AVANT-GARDE CONTINGENTS

Barney's account of meeting Wilde is quoted from *Adventures of the Mind,* 31. Natalie Barney's Aesthetic manifesto is quoted from Benstock, 275; Barney's description of Paris and Maryse Choisy's article in *Pour Rire* are in Latimer, 42, 5–6. De Gourmont's *Letters to the Amazon* is quoted from 7, 29, 62. Radclyffe Hall's letter to Ellis and the judge's verdict are in Faderman, *Surpassing,* 322, 467, n. 9. The quotation satirizing campaigns against *The Well* is from Ruehl, 31. Romaine Brooks's remarks about her portrait of Una Troubridge are quoted from Brooks, 292; Latimer quotes comparisons of Brooks with Proust and Wilde on 51, 60.

Gertrude Stein's remarks on moving to France and comparing herself with Picasso and Matisse are quoted from Benstock, 13, 189. Her assessment of Picasso's portrait of her is in Gertrude Stein, *Picasso* (1938, rpt. Boston: Beacon Press, 1959), 8. Quotes of the Cone sisters are from Richardson, 15–16.

SEXUALITY AND RACE

The claim for gay "minority consciousness" is from Garber, 329. The newspaper warning about consorting with white homosexuals is quoted in Chauncey, 260–61. Alain Locke is quoted from Garber, 330. Weinberg is quoted from "'Boy Crazy,'" 47. Smalls is quoted from "Public Face, Private Thoughts," 99.

STRATEGIES OF CODING

Stein is quoted from Benstock, 17. Edith Sitwell is quoted from her "The Work of Gertrude Stein," *Vogue* [London] (early October 1925), 73. Natalie Barney's quoted foreword introduces Stein's *As Fine as Melanctha* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1954). Haskell was the first scholar to acknowledge Hartley's homosexuality in her 1980 catalog. Hartley's description of von Freyburg is quoted from Haskell, *Marsden Hartley*, 32. Hartley is quoted from his *Somehow a Past*, 77, 82, 83, 87–90. Other quotations from Hartley come from Weinberg, *Speaking for Vice*, 142, 147, 150, 156, 158–59. Hartley's "Dissertation on Modern Painting" and the M—N H— speeches from Stein's "IIIIIIIII" are reprinted in *On Art*, ed. Gail R. Scott (New York: Horizon, 1982). Proust is quoted from *The Journals of André Gide*, trans. Justin O'Brian (New York: Alfred A. Knopf, 1947), 2:265.

Hartley's memoir of Demuth is "Farewell Charles: An Outline in Portraiture of Charles Demuth—Painted," in *The New Caravan,* ed. Alfred Kreymborg et al. (New York: W. W. Norton, 1936), 552–62, quoted from 554. Quotations from Demuth and from critics concerning his "posters" are from Dillon and Reed, 41, 44.

THE LIMITS OF THE AVANT-GARDE

On the review invoking Demuth's femininity, the Dada journal, the O'Neill play, and Hemingway, see Weinberg, *Speaking for Vice*, 51, 124, 201, 204. Wyndham Lewis is quoted from Quentin Bell and Stephen Chaplin, "The Ideal Home Rumpus," *Apollo* (October 1964), 284–91; and from Wyndham Lewis, *Men Without Art* (London: Cassell, 1934), 170. Le Corbusier is quoted from his *Towards a New Architecture*, trans. Frederick Etchells (London: Architectural Press, 1927), 18–19. Roger Fry is quoted from Virginia Woolf, *Roger Fry* (New York: Harcourt Brace Jovanovich, 1940), 230–31. On Grant's bathing paintings, see Richard Shone, *The Art of Bloomsbury* (London: Tate Gallery, 1999), 202–203; on his erotic works, see Turnbaugh.

THE AVANT-GARDE AND THE OPEN SECRET

The quotation on secrets from Wilde's *Dorian Gray* is adduced in Miller, 195. The 1928 edition of Cocteau's *Le Livre Blanc* appeared with only the initials of the publishers, Maurice Sachs and Jacques Bonjean, to identify the source of the book.

The top ranking of Duchamp's Fountain is reported in "Duchamp's Urinal Tops Art Survey," BBC News, December 1, 2004 (accessed at news.bbc.co.uk/2/hi/entertainment/4059997.stm). Duchamp acknowledged the relevance of Freud to his *L.H.O.O.Q.* in an interview in *Evidence* 3 (Fall 1961), 36. George Segal's interpretation of *Etant donnés* is quoted from an interview in Roth and Katz, *Difference/Indifference* (cited in chapter 6), 98. This chapter's contextualization of Duchamp in the sexual dynamics of the early-twentieth-century avant-garde challenges Hopkins's assumption that apparent allusions to homosexuality in his art are a form of "gay appropriation" imposed by a subsequent generation (113–14). Hopkins's project of recuperating Duchamp for a "less apologetic account of male identity" (2) than that he associates with the feminist "political correctness in the late 1980s" (10) is frank about his interest "as far as possible, in playing down . . . continuity with the homosexual (as in a 'queer studies' approach to masculinity)" (18). The dynamic of the open secret, with its potential to offer the greatest rewards to artists who allude to homosexuality without being identified with it, helps explain the "dual modalities" or "structural binarism" that Hopkins identifies between the "camp Duchamp" (114) and his "laddish" heterosexuality.

THE OPEN SECRET AND MASS CULTURE

On Liberace, see Drewal. Quoted ads for Arrow Underwear are in Joffe, 81. On Leyendecker, see also Boyce and Martin. On fashion photographers, see Waugh, 102–140, 163–65. Cecil Beaton is quoted from Josephine Ross, *Beaton in VOGUE* (London: Thames & Hudson, 1986), 7. Part of a page taken from Beaton's scrapbook, now in the collection of the Victoria and Albert, is illustrated in Cooper, *The Sexual Perspective* (cited in the introduction), 191; the scrapbooks were discussed by Richard Meyer in an untitled presentation on the panel "Another Names Project: Naming Homophobia" at the College Art Association conference, Boston, February 25, 2006.

CHAPTER 5

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For an example of a homophobic exposé in a left-leaning intellectual literary quarterly, see William Barrett, "New Innocents Abroad," *Partisan Review* 17 (March 1950), 272–91. "Mock shock" is discussed in Sherry, 31, 106; Sherry is quoted from 52 (the "artists" in this study are overwhelmingly musicians and other performers). Canaday assigns psychologists less responsibility than "the courts, Congress, and the INS [Immigration and Naturalization Service]" in rigidifying "the homo-hetero binarism" (216), but the pernicious history she documents relied less on linking artistic and sexual identity than did psychological theorizing. On American attitudes toward homosexuality after World War II, see also D'Emilio, 3–73. British police statistics are quoted from Weeks, 240. On the analogous effects of World War I in Britain, see Hoare. Clements Fry's *Mental Health in College* (New York: Commonwealth Fund, 1942) is quoted from 340–41.

EXPRESSION AND REPRESSION IN POSTWAR ART

Evidence of Grant Wood's homosexuality was introduced by Henry Adams in the lecture "The Truth About Grant Wood," College Art Association annual conference, New York, February 26, 2000; see also Taylor. On the production and reception of *American Gothic*, see Corn, 128–42.

On homoeroticism in Paul Cadmus's circle, see Leddick's *Intimate Companions* (cited in chapter 4) and Meyer, 32–93; on censorship of these artists, see Weinberg, 49, 73–74.

On Tobey, see Kangas. Tobey is quoted from Arthur L. Dahl et al., *Mark Tobey: Art and Belief* (Oxford: George Ronald, 1984), 5, 21.

Clement Greenberg's reviews of Tobey and Pollock are quoted from his *Collected Essays and Criticism*, ed. John O'Brian (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1986), 1:205–206, 2:166; his review of Motherwell is quoted from 2:242.

On homophobia and rhetorics of heroism in abstract expressionism, see Craven, 115–23, and Gibson, 11–17, 127–32, which quotes the analysis of Pollock as "super-macho" (11).

The exclusionary rules of the Artists' Club are cited in Thomas Livesay, *Ruth Abrams: Paintings 1940 to 1985* (New York: Grey Art Gallery, 1986), 12. Robert Motherwell is quoted from Max Kozloff, "An Interview with Robert Motherwell," *Artforum* (September 1965), 33–37. The case for Pollock's homosexuality is made in Naifeh and Smith, 478–83, which quotes Pollock on figuration (591).

Kaprow is quoted on Rauschenberg from Katz, "The Art of Code," 195. Kroll's hostile review of Rauschenberg is in *ARTnews* (December 1961), 12. On Jasper Johns, Kenneth Silver's "Modes of Disclosure" is quoted from 180, 190. Johns is quoted from Raynor, 22, and Anfam, 202. Attempts to censor scholarship on Johns's and Rauschenberg's sexuality are described in Jonathan Katz, "Censorship in the Museum World," *Gay and Lesbian Caucus [of the College Art Association] Newsletter* (November/May 1998), 6. Katz's analysis of Johns's and Rauschenberg's relation to broad cultural trends comes in his "Passive Resistance" and "Committing the Perfect Crime."

POPULAR IMAGERY, POP ART, AND THE ORIGINS OF POSTMODERNISM

Warhol is quoted from Warhol and Hackett, 3, 39. Kramer's review of Rauschenberg is from his "Month in Review Column," *Arts* (February 1959), 48–51. Emile de

Antonio's dismay at Warhol's inclusion of drips in pop imagery is quoted from Smith, 97. Arnheim is quoted in Katz, "Passive Resistance," 120. The quoted interview with Warhol is from G. R. Swenson, "'What is Pop Art?' Answers from Eight Painters–Part II," *Art News* (November 1963), 26, 60–61. Homophobic responses to pop art are quoted from Thomas.

On Hollywood stereotypes of homosexual professions, see Russo, 4–59. On the obfuscation of same-sex relationships in design journalism, see Henry Urbach, "Peeking at Gay Interiors," *Design Book Review* 25 (Summer 1992), 38–40.

Circulation figures for and attacks on physique magazines are quoted from Waugh, 217, 433 n. 50. The "Anti-Pleasure League" editorial is quoted from *Physique Pictorial* (Fall 1955), 12. The "Creed of the Grecian Guild" describing its "brotherhood" appears in every issue of the *Grecian Guild Pictorial*. The report about veterans comes from *Physique Pictorial* (Fall 1955), 16; "Homosexuality and Bodybuilding" appeared in *Physique Pictorial* (Fall 1956), 17. The physique magazines' antagonism toward middle-class homosexuals in the 1960s is analyzed in Daniel Harris, *The Rise and Fall of Gay Culture* (cited in chapter 8), 88–89. "Tips for the Amateur Physique Photographer" appeared in *Physique Pictorial* (May 1952). George Quaintance's catalog-"types" feature from *Grecian Guild Pictorial* (Spring 1956) is quoted from Nealon, 132. The quotation about Quaintance comes from *Physique Pictorial* (Spring 1955), 27.

Francis Bacon is quoted from David Sylvester, *Interviews with Francis Bacon*, 2nd ed. (London: Thames and Hudson, 1980), 114, 116. On Bacon's use of physique magazines, see Ofield, 64–69. Donald Kuspit's "Francis Bacon: The Authority of Flesh," *Artforum* 13.10 (Summer 1975), 50–59, is quoted from 58–59. Ross Bleckner is quoted from his "In Praise of Bacon," *Advocate* (July 8, 1997), 62–63.

David Hockney's discussion of physique magazines is quoted from Hockney, 93. Other Hockey quotations are from Livingstone, 21, 11; Hockney's remarks on photography come from Weschler, 9.

Warhol is quoted on his films from Koestenbaum, 71, 136–37. Vivian Gornick's introduction to Valerie Solanas's *SCUM Manifesto* is quoted from the edition published by the Olympia Press (New York, 1970), xxxvi. Warhol is quoted on pornography and commodities from Warhol and Hackett, 294. Greenberg on Warhol is quoted from *The Collected Essays and Criticism*, ed. John O'Brian (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1986), 4:281. Kramer is quoted from *Revenge of the Philistines*, 1, 5.

CAMP AND CRITICISM

Kramer is further quoted from Revenge of the Philistines, 5–7. The early critical response to Sontag is John Adkins Richardson, "Dada, Camp, and the Mode Called Pop," *Journal of Aesthetics and Art Criticism* 24.4 (Summer 1966), 549–58 (quotes from 552). On Larry Rivers and camp, see Butts.

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ART AND POLITICS

The quoted *New York Times* article appeared on December 17, 1963. Robert Atkins is quoted from "Art on Stone Walls," *Village Voice* (June 13, 1989), accessed at www.RobertAtkins.net/beta/shift/queering/stone. A copy of Thomas Lanigan-Schmidt's handwritten text remains in part of the *Mother Stonewall and the Golden Rats* installation still occupying a stairwell at the Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual, and Transgender Community Center; another copy is at the New York Public Library. The artist's comparison to a "small town Benedictine sermon" comes from an interview conducted for this book.

George Segal is quoted on Duchamp's followers from a 1973 interview with Moira Roth, reprinted in Roth and Katz, 99–100. Quotations from the debate over his *Gay Liberation* are from James Saslow, "A Sculpture without a Country," *Christopher Street* (Februrary 1981), 23–32 (Saslow here quotes Nevelson anonymously, but uses her name when he tells the same story in *Pictures and*

Passions [cited in the introduction], 287); and David B. Boyce, "The Making of *Gay Liberation* (the statue)," *Harvard Gay and Lesbian Review* (Spring 1997), 11–13.

On John Button and Mario Dubsky's mural, see Cooper, *The Sexual Perspective*, 272–74, and Saslow, *Pictures and Passions*, 259–60 (both cited in the introduction).

On the exclusion of gay and lesbian examples from the Museum of Modern Art's 1988 exhibition *Committed to Print: Social and Political Themes in Recent American Printed Art*, see Crimp and Rolston, *AIDS Demographics* (cited in chapter 7), 16–18. As a contrast in a non-art venue, many gay/lesbian political posters were in the New York Public Library's 1994 exhibition *Becoming Visible: The Legacy of Stonewall: An Exhibition on the History of New York's Lesbian and Gay Communities*; see the related book by McGarry and Wasserman.

On artists' photographs of the New York piers, see Weinberg, *Male Desire*, 161–62. Arthur Tress is quoted from Marco Livingstone, ed., *Arthur Tress: Talisman* (London: Thames and Hudson, 1986), 152. David Wojnarowicz is quoted from *David Wojnarowicz: Brush Fires in the Social Landscape*, 9. On his work on the piers, see also Scholder, 46–49.

FEMINISTS, LESBIANS, AND FEMALE SENSIBILITY

Deborah Kass is quoted from Smyth, 56. On debates over lesbianism and feminism in relation to art in the 1970s, see Hammond, *Lesbian Art in America*, 16–40.

Time's coverage of Kate Millett is quoted from "The Liberation of Kate Millett," (August 31, 1970), 18–19, and "Women's Lib: A Second Look" (December 14, 1970), 50. Millett's account of this episode is in *Flying* (New York: Alfred A. Knopf, 1974), 15–17, 23.

The phrase "feminism is the theory; lesbianism is the practice" is widely attributed to feminist writer Ti-Grace Atkinson, with many citations referencing *Radical Feminism*, ed. Ann Koedt, Ellen Levine, and Anita Rapone (New York: Quadrangle, 1973), 246. Adrienne Rich is quoted from "Compulsory Heterosexuality and the Lesbian Continuum," 53–54; and "It Is the Lesbian in Us . . .," 200–201.

Broude and Garrard's valuable survey, *The Power of Feminist Art,* discusses "essentialism" (23–28) and includes two important essays on California feminist art projects: Faith Wilding, "The Feminist Art Programs at Fresno and CalArts 1970–75" (32–47) and Arlene Raven, "*Womanhouse*" (48–65), from which quotations about the place of lesbian identity in *Womanhouse* are taken (42, 63).

The controversies over Judy Chicago's *Dinner Party* are detailed in Thompson, "Finding the Phallus." Richardson's review, "Strictly from Hunger," is quoted from *The New York Review of Books* 28.7 (April 30, 1981) (accessed at www.nybooks.com). His adulatory attitude toward Picasso's visual puns on female genitalia is critiqued in Adam Gopnik, "Escaping Picasso," *New Yorker* (December 16, 1996), 93–94. The 1990 *Washington Times* column is quoted in Lippard, "Uninvited Guests," 43.

On early exhibitions and publications on art by lesbians, see Hammond, *Lesbian Art in America*, 15–54 (quoted from 41, 45–46, 96), and "A Space of Infinite Pleasurable Possibilities" (quoted from 104). On art in lesbian magazines, see Thompson, "Dear Sisters." The "Lesbian Art and Artists" issue of *Heresies* includes quotations from Louise Fishman, Dona Nelson, Hammond, and Fran Winant (3, 4, 74–75, 80–81, 103). Fishman's and Winant's later comments are quoted from Hammond, 34, 43. Hammond's 1973 gallery statement is quoted from her *Wrappings*, 9; her retrospective comments on that quotation are taken from correspondence conducted for this book. Nancy Fried is quoted from a telephone interview conducted for this book. On early lesbian exhibitions, see also Blake, Rinder, and Scholder, *In a Different Light* (cited in chapter 7), from which Hammond is quoted (45–47). On the Los Angeles lesbian art scene, see Wolverton, quoted from 63.

On lesbian photography, see essays by Grover. Tee Corrine is quoted from her "Who's Looking," 36, and from www.queer-arts.org/archive/9809/corinne.

IDENTITY AND SENSIBILITY

Cameron's *Extended Sensibilities* catalog is quoted from v, 7, 8, 40. The quoted review of Delmas Howe is Edward Lucie-Smith, "The Gay Seventies," *Art and Artists* (December 1979), 11; Howe is quoted from Harmony Hammond, *Out West*. John Perreault is quoted from "Is there a gay culture? 'Not Yet,'" *Soho News* (June 15, 1980), 20. Thomas Lawson is quoted from "Last Exit Painting," *Artforum* (October 1981), 40–48; on David Salle's antagonistic relationship to feminism, see Reed, "Postmodernism and the Art of Identity" (cited in chapter 8), 277–78. Cameron's recollections of the show are quoted from Blake, Rinder, and Scholder, *In a Different Light* (cited in chapter 7), 53, and from correspondence conducted for this book. Hammond and Fried's memories of the show are also quoted from correspondence concerning this book. Winant is quoted from Hammond, *Lesbian Art in America*, 103. Saslow's review is quoted from Marcia Tucker, *A Short Life of Trouble: Forty Years in the Art World* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2008), 144. Other quoted reviews are Richard Flood, "Extended Sensibilities," *Artforum* (March 1983), 72–73, and Nicolas A. Moufarrege, "Lavender: On Homosexuality and Art," *Arts* (October 1982), 78–87. Charley Brown is quoted from correspondence conducted for this book. Panel discussions are quoted from transcripts in Russell Ferguson et al., eds., *Discourses: Conversations in Postmodern Art and Culture* (Cambridge: MIT Press, 1990), 131, 138, 140.

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AIDS AND THE AVANT-GARDE

The estimate of 500 artists dealing with AIDS is in *From Media to Metaphor: Art about AIDS*, 18. On Rock Hudson, see Meyer, "Rock Hudson's Body," and Watney, *Policing Desire*, 87–90. Watney is quoted from *Policing Desire*, 4.

On portraits of people with AIDS, see Grover, "Visible Lesions." Watney is quoted from "Representing AIDS," 179. Crimp is quoted from *AIDS: The Artists' Response*, 10, and from Crimp and Rolston, *AIDS Demographics*, 18; Grover is quoted from *AIDS: The Artists' Response*, 2.

Duane Michals is quoted from *Homage to Cavafy* (n.p.); Tom Evans, "Full Blown Out of Zeus's Forehead," *Art & Artists* (August 1985), 12–15; Richard B. Woodward, "Duane Michaels," *ARTnews* (April 1989), 156–57; and Jim Provenzano, "The Poet's Eye," *Bay Area Reporter* (May 7, 2007), accessed at www.ebar.com/arts/art_article.php?sec=books&article=283. *Smoking in Bed* originally appeared in *Christopher Street* (December 1984). William Yang is quoted from an interview with Wendy Cavanett, accessed at www.thei.aust.com/isite/btl/btlinyang and from www.bulletin.ninemsm.com.au/bulletin/EdDesk.

Ross Bleckner is quoted from "Ross Bleckner talks to Dan Cameron," *Artforum* (March 2003), 230–31; and from John Zinsser, "Ross Bleckner," *Journal of Contemporary Art* 1.1 (Spring 1988), 52. On Felix Gonzales-Torres, see Robert Storr, "Setting Traps for the Mind and Heart," *Art in America* (January 1996), 70–77, 125; and Simon Watney, "In Purgatory: The Work of Felix Gonzalez-Torres," *Parkett* 39 (1994), 38–47.

AIDS, ACTIVISM, AND VISUAL CULTURE

On the NAMES Project AIDS Memorial Quilt, see www.aidsquilt.org, and Ruskin, from which the wish-list of materials is quoted (9).

On ACT UP graphics, see Crimp and Rolston, from which Crimp is quoted on "foreknowledge" (14); Ted Gott, "Where the Streets Have New Aims: The Poster in the Age of AIDS," in *Don't Leave Me This Way*, 187–211; and Meyer, "This Is to Enrage You," from which are drawn quotations about "craftsy" protest graphics (54), mainstream "victim photography" (56), and the Venice Biennale (74). The characterization of the New Museum installation as a "visual demonstration" came from curator Bill Olander, as recalled by Avram Finkelstein, one of the designers (quoted from correspondence carried out for this book). Some of the elegant, forceful posters now in the collection of the New York Public Library belie the characterization of all earlier gay and lesbian political imagery work as simply "craftsy"; see, for example, the 1978 poster from San Francisco illustrated in McGarry and Wasserman (cited in chapter 6), 177. On lesbian spin-off groups, see essays in Ingram, Bouthillette, and Retter, 406–46.

Bösche is quoted from "Jenny, Eric, Martin . . . and me," *The Guardian* (January 31, 2000), accessed on www.guardian.co.uk/books/2000/jan/31/booksforchildrenandteenagers.features11.

Gombrich's argument is made in "The Visual Image: Its Place in Communication" (1982), reprinted in *The Essential Gombrich* (London: Phaidon, 1996), 41–64. On the failed effort to target homoerotic poetry, see Bolton, 18.

My discussion of Robert Mapplethorpe draws from Meyer, *Outlaw Representation*, 168–223, from which are quoted Mapplethorpe (205), Representative Robert Dornan, Senator Jesse Helms (207), and Pat Buchanan (210). Crimp's dismissal of the "retrograde" Mapplethorpe in the 1982 "Appropriating Appropriation" catalog essay for his exhibition *Image Scavengers* is reprinted in *On the Museum's Ruins*, 126–37; Crimp revisits this essay, 6–12. The history of homophobic legislation addressed at arts funding is detailed in Vance,"Afterward," from which Vance is quoted (100).

Nan Goldin is quoted from the *Witnesses Against Our Vanishing* catalog, 14.

David Wojnarowicz's reaction to the controversy over *Witnesses Against Our Vanishing* is quoted and discussed in Yenawine, 190.

On the Cincinnati trial, see Jayne Merkel, "Report from Cincinnati: Art on Trial," *Art in America* (December 1990), 41–51; and Dennis Barrie, "The Scene of the Crime," *Art Journal* 50.3 (Fall 1991), 29–32. On Wojnarowicz's suit against the AFA, see his *Brushfires* 36–37. On subsequent NEA controversies, see Meyer, 244–64.

CHAPTER 8

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Reed is quoted from "Postmodernism and the Art of Identity," 280.
On the backlash against feminist art, see Broude and Garrard (cited in chapter 6), 28–29 (quoted from 29). On the end of ACT UP's artist collective, see Crimp, "Gran Fury." Dietcher is quoted from "What Does Silence Equal Now?" 95. On the fate of the NAMES Project, see Jesse McKinley, "A Changing Battle on AIDS Is Reflected in a Quilt," *New York Times* (January 31, 2007). Sokolowski is quoted from Baker, 146.

My characterization of the social trends contributing to the shattering of postmodernism is informed by Jameson, though for him this shattering of culture into apolitical consumerism is what "postmodernism" is (or was). Although some art and critical theory identified as postmodern in the 1980s falls into this paradigm, Jameson has been widely criticized—see Dellamora, as well as Halberstam (98–103)—for overlooking or disparaging social changes associated with gender and sexuality that were also identified as postmodern in the 1970s and 1980s.

Jack Pierson, curator of *The Name of This Show Is Not: Gay Art Now* (Paul Kasmin Gallery, New York, 2006) is quoted from a press release; the quoted review is by Les Simpson, *Time Out New York* 563 (July 13–19, 2006).

Foster is quoted from *Recodings*, 3, 13. Foster elsewhere articulates his awareness of this dynamic, acknowledging that "the lamenters" of the demise of faith in the "critical distance" that grants critics "social distinction" often "project a mythical moment of true criticality, while the celebrants see critical distance as instrumental mastery in disguise." Foster then warns that those who exercise critical judgment should take care not to equate critical distance with social superiority. "Otherwise critical theory may come to deserve the bad name with which it is often branded today" (*Return of the Real,* 225–26). This salutary warning goes unheeded, however, in Foster's own assumptions when he describes how artists were "politically effective . . . especially in the middle to late 1980s" in addressing issues "around the AIDS crisis, abortion rights, and apartheid," but treats this art as a kind of ethnography produced for or about a group positioned as a subordinate "other" (*Return of the Real,* 172). Overlooked in this account is any acknowledgment of art—or art criticism—produced by people who identified as part of communities affected by AIDS, abortion, or apartheid.

QUEER

Hammond on *queer* is quoted from *Lesbian Art in America* 100–101. Other quotations are from Anzaldúa, 249–50, and Muñoz, 6, 11. Hammond thoughtfully addresses the barriers that discouraged the articulation of identity by lesbian artists of color in *Lesbian Art in America*, 57, 60–6.

Yasumasa Moriumura is quoted from *Daughter of Art History*, 119–20.

Deborah Kass is quoted from Cotter, 57, 115, and from Hammond, *Lesbian Art in America*, 125; see also Smyth, 56–58.

On *trans* terminology, see Halberstam, 53–54, and Feinberg, xi. Feinberg on photographs from diverse cultures is quoted from xii. Prosser is quoted from *Light in the Dark Room: Photography and Loss* (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 2005), 164–65.

Del LaGrace Volcano is quoted from Preciado, 9, 11, 5, and Smyth, 42. The identification of Volcano as a "queer man" and the use of the term *herm* come from correspondence conducted for this book. The term *herm* was lightheartedly proposed along with *merm* and *ferm* as nouns indicating gender identity by Ann Fausto-Sterling, "The Five Sexes: Why Male and Female Are Not Enough," *Sciences* (March/April 1993), 20–24; see also Fausto-Sterling's "The Five Sexes Revisited," *Sciences* (July/August 2000), 18–23.

Loren Cameron is quoted from *Body Alchemy*, 10. Catherine Opie is quoted from an interview with Russell Ferguson in *Catherine Opie*, 45, 48; see also Hammond, 150–53, Smyth, 43–44. My overview of artists involved with transgender and transsexual communities overlaps only tangentially with Halberstam's chapter on "Representing Transgender Bodies in Contemporary Art" in *In a Queer Place and Time*, in which the term *transgender* functions as a theoretical category, attractive in some respects, but unconcerned either with anachronism, as in the case of Eva Hesse (1936–70), or with contexts of production and reception, as in the case Jenny Saville (b. 1970), whose artistic practice is strongly identified with the perspectives of the surgeons she follows, as Halberstam acknowledges (112) while her inattentiveness to transgender and transsexual subjectivity is indicated by her use of the term *transvestite* to characterize someone with a penis and

hormone-induced breasts (interview with Simon Schama 2005, accessed at www.saatchi-gallery.co.uk/artists/jenny_saville).

FRAGMENTATION FROM WITHIN

Del LaGrace Volcano is quoted on the sex wars from Cooper, 15–16, and Deborah Orr, "Say Grace," *Guardian Weekend* (July 22, 1995), 15; Orr also discusses Volcano's history with Barbara Hammer. FTM Max Valerio is quoted in Cameron, 89. On the sex wars, see also Hammond, *Lesbian Art in America*, 112, 141. On feminist alliances with right-wing politicians, see Heartney. Blessing is quoted from *Rrose is Rrose is Rrose*, 107.

Hammond is quoted from *Lesbian Art in America*, 112 (on queerness), 141 (on "lesbian chic"). Nicole Eisenman is quoted from Hammond, 140 (where Hammond contests her self-presentation), Cotter, 65, and www.artseensoho.com/Art/TILTON/eisenman96/ei1.

PRESSURE FROM WITHOUT

Claims for the radicalism of trans identity often obscure its reliance on the power of medical authorities who develop, manage, and control the technologies associated with the naming and alteration of sex. One example is Feinberg's pronouncement, "I am trans*gender* and I have shaped myself surgically and hormonally twice in my life, and I reserve the right to do it again" (x). Halberstam's effort to narrow the focus on "transgender" as a category that "refuses the stability that the term transsexual may offer" is not matched by critical distinctions between self-fashioning and subjection to medical disciplines. Indeed, her conflation of the "utopian, technotopian, and spatially imaginative formulation of a body" (101) under the term *technotopias* risks validating a hierarchy in which technologically assisted modifications of sex and gender become the preferred paradigm without consideration of who controls those technologies administratively, economically, and ideologically.

The MoMA administrator is Philip Yenawine, quoted from "But What Has Changed," 21. On institutional self-censorship, see Smith, 128. The legal aspects of the Hayward Gallery episode are analyzed at www.artquest.org.uk/artlaw/censorship/mapplethorpe.

Comparisons of Peter Schjeldahl's critical rhetoric are quoted from his "The Desire of the Museum" (1989), reprinted in *The 7 Days Art Columns* (Great Barrington, MA: The Figures, 1990). 143; his "Express Yourself," *New Yorker* (February 9, 2004), 82–83; and his "Our Nicole," *Village Voice* (December 3, 1996), 93ff.

On criticism of the Biennial, curator Elizabeth Sussman is quoted from "Then and Now: Whitney Biennial 1993," *Art Journal* (Spring 2005), 75–79. Sussman is quoted on Gober from her catalog essay "Coming Together in Parts: Positive Power in the Art of the Nineties," in Whitney Museum of Art, *1993 Biennial Exhibition*, 13. Reviews are Roger Kimball, "Of chocolate, lard, and politics," *National Review* (April 26, 1993), 54–56; and Peter Schjeldahl, "Missing: The Pleasure Principle," *Village Voice* (March 16, 1993), 34, 38. The conversation of the *October* board is "The Politics of the Signifier," quoted from 3, 18, 26, 10 [ellipses in original]. The role of this generation of *October*'s circle of authors in attempting to foreclose analysis of gay references in Robert Rauschenberg's art is critiqued as "the new homophobia" in Katz, "Committing the Perfect Crime" (cited in chapter 5), 52–53.

Dave Hickey is quoted from Jennie Yabroff, "Reenter the Dragon," *Newsweek* (March 23, 2009), accessed at www.newsweek.com/id/189229, and from an interview with Sheila Heti, *Believer* (November/December 2007), accessed at www.believermag.com/issues/200711/?read=interview_hickey. Peter Schjeldahl's "Beauty Is Back" appeared in the *New York Times* (September 29, 1996); the second Schjeldahl quote is from Dietcher, 93.

On the minimization of AIDS in the posthumous marketing of Felix Gonzalez-Torres's art, see Moore, 168–73 (although permission to reproduce this artist's work in this book was ultimately granted, the process confirmed Moore's claims that scholars focusing on sexual identity or AIDS are discouraged by the gallery that represents his estate from pursuing this line of analysis).

WORKING THROUGH DIFFERENCE: THE BLACK MALE NUDE

Adrian Piper is quoted from "Notes on *The Mythic Being* I and II," 1973, 1974, in *Out of Order, Out of Sight, Vol. 1, Selected Writings in Meta-Art, 1968–1992* (Cambridge: MIT Press, 1996), 118, 123; and from Adam Shatz, "Black like Me: Conceptual Artist Adrian Piper gets under your Skin," *Lingua Franca* 8.8 (November 1998), 46. The quoted ads appeared in the *Village Voice* (September 27, 1973, and January 3, 1974). Peter Kennedy's film *Other Than Art's Sake* documents a 1973 iteration of Piper's "Mythic Being" performance.

Kobena Mercer's "Imaging the Black Man's Sex"(1986) and "Skin Head Sex Thing: Racial Difference and the Homoerotic Imaginary" (1989) are reprinted in *Welcome to the Jungle*, 171–219, quotations from 174, 177.

Rotimi Fani-Kayode's 1987 artist's statement is quoted from Sealy and Pivin, 5.

Glenn Ligon's *Feast of Scraps* is illustrated with an artist's statement in Andrew Perchuk and Helaine Posner, eds., *The Masculine Masquerade* (Cambridge: Massachusetts Institute of Technology, 1995), 89–99.

Lyle Ashton Harris's sources in eighteenth-century painting and Francis Bacon are noted in Harris and Harris, "Black Widow," 248, and Edward Leffingwell, "Lyle Ashton Harris at CRG," *Art in America* (November 2003). Harris compares his work to Fani-Kayode and Mapplethorpe in Cotter, 64. Caption quotation from Harris and Harris, 255.

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